Mother West Wind's CHILDREN

Thornton W. Burgess

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"Yap-yap-yap," barked Reddy Fox, as loud as he could.

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MOTHER WEST WIND'S CHILDREN

BY

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TO
ALL THE LITTLE FRIENDS
OF
JOHNNY CHUCK AND REDDY FOX,
AND TO
ALL WHO LOVE THE GREEN MEADOWS
AND THE SMILING POOL,
THE LAUGHING BROOK AND THE MERRY LITTLE BREEZES,
THIS LITTLE BOOK IS DEDICATED.

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I

DANNY MEADOW MOUSE LEARNS WHY HIS TAIL IS SHORT

MOTHER WEST WIND'S CHILDREN

I

DANNY MEADOW MOUSE LEARNS WHY HIS TAIL IS SHORT

DANNY MEADOW MOUSE sat in his doorway and looked down the Lone Little Path across the Green Meadows. Way, way over near the Smiling Pool he could see Old Mother West Wind's Children, the Merry Little Breezes, at play. Sammy Jay was sitting on a fence post. He pretended to be taking a sun bath, but really he was planning mischief. You never see Sammy

Jay that he isn't in mischief or planning it.

Reddy Fox had trotted past an hour before in a great hurry. Up on the hill Danny Meadow Mouse could just see Jimmy Skunk pulling over every old stick and stone he could find, no matter whose house it might be, and excusing himself because he was hungry and was looking for beetles.

Jolly, round, red Mr. Sun was playing at hide and seek behind some fleecy white clouds. All the birds were singing and singing, and the world was happy — all but Danny Meadow Mouse.

No, Danny Meadow Mouse was not happy. Indeed, he was very far from happy, and all because his tail was short.

By and by up came old Mr. Toad. It was a warm day and Mr. Toad was very hot and very, very thirsty. He stopped

to rest beside the house of Danny Meadow Mouse.

"Good morning, Danny Meadow Mouse," said old Mr. Toad, "it's a fine morning."

"Morning," said Danny Meadow Mouse, grumpily.

"I hope your health is good this morning," continued old Mr. Toad, just as if he hadn't noticed how short and cross Danny Meadow Mouse had answered.

Now old Mr. Toad is very ugly to look upon, but the ugliness is all in his looks. He has the sunniest of hearts and always he is looking for a chance to help someone.

"Danny Meadow Mouse," said old Mr. Toad, "you make me think of your grandfather a thousand times removed. You do indeed. You look just as he did when he lost the half of his tail and

realized that he never, never could get it back again."

Danny Meadow Mouse sat up suddenly.

"What are you talking about, old Mr. Toad? What are you talking about?" he asked. "Did my grandfather a thousand times removed lose the half of his tail, and was it shorter then than mine is now? Was it, old Mr. Toad? And how did he come to lose the half of it?"

Old Mr. Toad laughed a funny silent laugh. "It's a long story," said old Mr. Toad, and I'm afraid I can't tell it. Go down to the Smiling Pool and ask Great-Grandfather Frog, who is my first cousin, how it happened your grandfather a thousand times removed lost the half of his tail. But before you go catch three fat, foolish, green flies and take them with you as a present to Grandfather Frog."

Danny Meadow Mouse could hardly wait for old Mr. Toad to stop speaking. In fact, he was in such a hurry that he almost forgot his manners. Not quite, however, for he shouted "Thank you, Mr. Toad, thank you!" over his shoulder as he rushed off down the Lone Little Path.

You see his short tail had always been a matter of mortification to Danny Meadow Mouse. All his cousins in the Mouse family and the Rat family have long, smooth, tapering tails, and they have always been a source of envy to Danny Meadow Mouse. He had felt his queer short tail to be a sort of disgrace. So when he would meet one of his cousins dancing down the Lone Little Path, with his long, slim, tapering tail behind him, Danny Meadow Mouse would slip out of sight under the long grass, he was so ashamed of his own little

tail. It looked so mean and small! He had wondered and wondered if the Meadow Mice had always had short tails. He used to ask everyone who came his way if they had ever seen a Meadow Mouse with a long tail, but he had never found any one who had.

"Perhaps," thought Danny Meadow Mouse as he hurried down the Lone Little Path, "perhaps Grandfather Frog, who is very wise, will know why my tail is short."

So he hurried this way and he hurried that way over the Green Meadows in search of fat, foolish, green flies. And when he had caught three, he caught one more for good measure. Then he started for the Smiling Pool as fast as his short legs would take him.

When finally he reached the edge of the Smiling Pool he was quite out of breath. There sat Great-Grandfather

Frog on his big, green lily pad. He was blinking his great goggle eyes at jolly, round, red Mr. Sun.

"Oh, Grandfather Frog," said Danny Meadow Mouse in a very small voice, for you know he was quite out of breath with running, "Oh, Grandfather Frog, I've brought you four fat, foolish, green flies."

Grandfather Frog put a hand behind an ear and listened. "Did I hear someone say 'foolish, green flies?'" asked Grandfather Frog.

"Yes, Grandfather Frog, here they are," said Danny Meadow Mouse, still in a very small voice. Then he gave Grandfather Frog the four fat, foolish, green flies.

"What is it that you want me to do for you, Danny Meadow Mouse?" asked Grandfather Frog as he smacked his lips, for he knew that Danny Meadow

Mouse must want something to bring him four fat, foolish, green flies.

"If you please," said Danny Meadow Mouse, very politely, "if you please, Grandfather Frog, old Mr. Toad told me that you could tell me how Grandfather Meadow Mouse a thousand times removed lost half of his tail. Will you, Grandfather Frog — will you?"

"Chug-a-rum," said Grandfather Frog. "My cousin, Mr. Toad, talks too much."

But he settled himself comfortably on the big lily pad, and this is what he told Danny Meadow Mouse:

"Once upon a time, when the world was young, Mr. Meadow Mouse, your grandfather a thousand times removed, was a very fine gentleman. He took a great deal of pride in his appearance, did Mr. Meadow Mouse, and they used to say on the Green Meadows that he spent an hour, a full hour, every day

combing his whiskers and brushing his coat.

"Anyway, he was very fine to look upon, was Mr. Meadow Mouse, and not the least attractive thing about him was his beautiful, long, slim tail, of which he was very proud.

"Now about this time there was a great deal of trouble on the Green Meadows and in the Green Forest, for some one was stealing—yes, stealing! Mr. Rabbit complained first. To be sure, Mr. Rabbit was lazy and his cabbage patch had grown little more than weeds while he had been minding other folks' affairs rather than his own, but, then, that was no reason why he should lose half of the little which he did raise. And that is just what he said had happened.

"No one really believed what Mr. Rabbit said, for he had such a bad name for telling things which were not so that

when he did tell the truth no one could be quite sure of it.

"So no one paid much heed to what Mr. Rabbit said until Happy Jack Squirrel one day went to his snug little hollow in the big chestnut tree where he stores his nuts and discovered half had been stolen. Then Striped Chipmunk lost the greater part of his winter store of corn. A fat trout was stolen from Billy Mink.

"It was a terrible time, for every one suspected every one else, and no one on the Green Meadows was happy.

"One evening Mr. Meadow Mouse went for a stroll along the Crooked Little Path up the hill. It was dark, very dark indeed. But just as he passed Striped Chipmunk's granary, the place where he stores his supply of corn and acorns for the winter, Mr. Meadow Mouse met his cousin, Mr. Wharf Rat. Now Mr. Wharf Rat was very big and strong and Mr.

Meadow Mouse had for a long time looked up to and admired him.

"'Good evening, Cousin Meadow Mouse,' said Mr. Wharf Rat, swinging a bag down from his shoulder. 'Will you do a favor for me?'

"Now Mr. Meadow Mouse felt very much flattered, and as he was a very obliging fellow anyway, he promptly said he would.

"'All right,' said Mr. Wharf Rat. 'I'm going to get you to tote this bag down the Crooked Little Path to the hollow chestnut tree. I've got an errand back on top of the hill.'

"So Mr. Meadow Mouse picked up the bag, which was very heavy, and swung it over his shoulder. Then he started down the Crooked Little Path. Half way down he met Striped Chipmunk.

"'Good evening, Mr. Meadow Mouse,' said Striped Chipmunk. 'What are

you toting in the bag across your shoulder?'

"Now, of course, Mr. Meadow Mouse didn't know what was in the bag and he didn't like to admit that he was working for another, for he was very proud, was Mr. Meadow Mouse.

"So he said: 'Just a planting of potatoes I begged from Jimmy Skunk, just a planting of potatoes, Striped Chipmunk.'

"Now no one had ever suspected Mr. Meadow Mouse of stealing — no indeed! Striped Chipmunk would have gone his way and thought no more about it, had it not happened that there was a hole in the bag and from it something dropped at his feet. Striped Chipmunk picked it up and it *wasn't* a potato. It was a fat acorn. Striped Chipmunk said nothing but slipped it into his pocket.

"'Good night,' said Mr. Meadow Mouse, once more shouldering the bag.

"'Good night,' said Striped Chipmunk.

"No sooner had Mr. Meadow Mouse disappeared in the darkness down the Crooked Little Path than Striped Chipmunk hurried to his granary. Some one had been there and stolen all his acorns!

"Then Striped Chipmunk ran to the house of his cousin, Happy Jack Squirrel, and told him how the acorns had been stolen from his granary and how he had met Mr. Meadow Mouse with a bag over his shoulder and how Mr. Meadow Mouse had said that he was toting home a planting of potatoes he had begged from Jimmy Skunk. 'And this,' said Striped Chipmunk, holding out the fat acorn, 'is what fell out of the bag.'

"Then Striped Chipmunk and Happy Jack Squirrel hurried over to Jimmy Skunk's house, and, just as they expected, they found that Mr. Meadow Mouse had

not begged a planting of potatoes of Jimmy Skunk.

"So Striped Chipmunk and Happy Jack Squirrel and Jimmy Skunk hurried over to Mr. Rabbit's and told him all about Mr. Meadow Mouse and the bag of potatoes that dropped acorns. Mr. Rabbit looked very grave, very grave indeed. Then Striped Chipmunk and Happy Jack Squirrel and Jimmy Skunk and Mr. Rabbit started to tell Mr. Coon, who was cousin to old King Bear.

"On the way they met Hooty the Owl, and because he could fly softly and quickly, they sent Hooty the Owl to tell all the meadow people who were awake to come to the hollow chestnut tree. So Hooty the Owl flew away to tell all the little meadow people who were awake tc meet at the hollow chestnut tree.

"When they reached the hollow chestnut tree whom should they find there

but Mr. Meadow Mouse fast asleep beside the bag he had brought for Mr. Wharf Rat, who had wisely stayed away.

"Very softly Striped Chipmunk stole up and opened the bag. Out fell his store of fat acorns. Then they waked Mr. Meadow Mouse and marched him off to old Mother Nature, where they charged him with being a thief.

"Old Mother Nature listened to all they had to say. She saw the bag of acorns and she heard how Mr. Meadow Mouse had said that he had a planting of potatoes. Then she asked him if he had stolen the acorns. Yes, Sir, she asked him right out if he had stolen the acorns.

"Of course Mr. Meadow Mouse said that he had not stolen the acorns.

"'Then where did you get the bag of acorns?' asked old Mother Nature.

"When she asked this, Mr. Wharf Rat,

who was sitting in the crowd of meadow people, got up and softly tiptoed away when he thought no one was looking. But old Mother Nature saw him. You can't fool old Mother Nature. No, Sir, you can't fool old Mother Nature, and it's of no use to try.

"Mr. Meadow Mouse didn't know what to say. He knew now that Mr. Wharf Rat must be the thief, but Mr. Wharf Rat was his cousin, and he had always looked up to him as a very fine gentleman. He couldn't tell the world that Mr. Wharf Rat was a thief. So Mr. Meadow Mouse said nothing.

"Three times old Mother Nature asked Mr. Meadow Mouse where he got the bag of acorns, and each time Mr. Meadow Mouse said nothing.

"'Mr. Meadow Mouse,' said old Mother Nature, and her voice was very stern, 'I know that you did not steal the

acorns of Striped Chipmunk. I know that you did not even guess that there were stolen acorns in that bag. Everyone else thinks that you are the thief who caused so much trouble on the Green Meadows and in the Green Forest. But I know who the real thief is and he is stealing away as fast as he can go down the Lone Little Path this very minute.'

"All of the little meadow people and forest folks turned to look down the Lone Little Path, but it was so dark none could see, none but Hooty the Owl, whose eyes are made to see in the dark.

"'I see him!' cried Hooty the Owl. 'It's Mr. Wharf Rat!'

"'Yes,' said old Mother Nature, 'it's Mr. Wharf Rat — he is the thief. And this shall be his punishment: Always hereafter he will be driven out wherever he is found. He shall no longer live in the Green Meadows or the Green Forest.

Everyone will turn their backs upon him. He will live on what others throw away. He will live in filth and there will be no one to say a good word for him. He will become an outcast instead of a fine gentleman.'

"'And you, Mr. Meadow Mouse, in order that you may remember always to avoid bad company, and that while it is a splendid thing to be loyal to your friends and not to tell tales, it is also a very, very wrong thing to shield those who have done wrong when by so doing you simply help them to keep on doing wrong — you shall no longer have the splendid long tail of which you are so proud, but it shall be short and stubby.'

"Even while old Mother Nature was speaking, Mr. Meadow Mouse felt his tail grow shorter and shorter, and when she had finished he had just a little mean stub of a tail.

" Of course he felt terribly. And while Striped Chipmunk hurried to tell him how sorry he felt, and while all the other little meadow people also hurried to tell him how sorry they felt, he could not be comforted. So he slipped away as quickly as he could, and because he was so ashamed he crept along underneath the long grass that no one should see his short tail. And ever since that long ago time when the world was young," concluded Grandfather Frog, " the Meadow Mice have had short tails and have always scurried along under cover of the long grass where no one will see them. And the Wharf Rats have never again lived in the Green Meadows or in the Green Forest, but have lived on filth and garbage around the homes of men, with every man's hand against them."

" Thank you, Grandfather Frog," said Danny Meadow Mouse, very soberly.

"Now I understand why my tail is short and I shall not forget."

"But it isn't your fault at all, Danny Meadow Mouse," cried the Merry Little Breezes, who had been listening, "and we love you just as much as if your tail was long!"

Then they played tag with him all the way up the Lone Little Path to his house, till Danny Meadow Mouse quite forgot that he had wished that his tail was long.

II

WHY REDDY FOX HAS NO FRIENDS

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WHY REDDY FOX HAS NO FRIENDS

THE Green Meadows lay peaceful and still. Mother Moon, sailing high overhead, looked down upon them and smiled and smiled, flooding them with her silvery light. All day long the Merry Little Breezes of Old Mother West Wind had romped there among the asters and goldenrod. They had played tag through the cat rushes around the Smiling Pool. For very mischief they had rubbed the fur of the Field Mice babies the wrong way and had blown a fat green fly right out of Grandfather Frog's mouth just as his lips came together with a smack. Now they were safely tucked in bed behind the Purple

Hills, and so they missed the midnight feast at the foot of the Lone Pine.

But Reddy Fox was there. You can always count on Reddy Fox to be about when mischief or good times are afoot, especially after Mr. Sun has pulled his nightcap on.

Jimmy Skunk was there. If there is any mischief Reddy Fox does not think of Jimmy Skunk will be sure to discover it.

Billy Mink was there. Yes indeed, Billy Mink was there! Billy Mink is another mischief maker. When Reddy Fox and Jimmy Skunk are playing pranks or in trouble of any kind you are certain to find Billy Mink close by. That is, you are certain to find him if you look sharp enough. But Billy Mink is so slim, he moves so quickly, and his wits are so sharp, that he is not seen half so often as the others.

With Billy Mink came his cousin,

Shadow the Weasel, who is sly and cruel. No one likes Shadow the Weasel.

Little Joe Otter and Jerry Muskrat came. They were late, for the legs of Little Joe Otter are so short that he is a slow traveler on land, while Jerry Muskrat feels much more at home in the water than on the dry ground.

Of course Peter Rabbit was there. Without him no party on the Green Meadows would be complete, and Peter likes to be abroad at night even better than by day. With Peter came his cousin, Jumper the Hare, who had come down from the Pine Forest for a visit.

Boomer the Nighthawk and Hooty the Owl completed the party, though Hooty had not been invited and no one knew that he was there.

Each was to contribute something to the feast — the thing that he liked best. Such an array as Mother Moon looked

down upon! Reddy Fox had brought a plump, tender chicken, stolen from Farmer Brown's dooryard.

Very quietly, like a thin, brown shadow, Billy Mink had slipped up to the duck pond and — alas! Now Mother Quack had one less in her pretty little flock than when as jolly, round, red Mr. Sun went to bed behind the Purple Hills, she had counted her babies as they tucked their heads under their wings.

Little Joe Otter had been fishing and he brought a great fat brother of the lamented Tommy Trout, who didn't mind.

Jerry Muskrat brought up from the mud of the river bottom some fine fresh water clams, of which he is very fond.

Jimmy Skunk stole three big eggs from the nest of old Gray Goose.

Peter Rabbit and Jumper the Hare rolled up a great, tender, fresh cabbage.

Boomer the Nighthawk said that he was very sorry, but he was on a diet of insects, which he must swallow one at a time, so to save trouble he had swallowed them as he caught them.

Now Hooty the Owl is a glutton and is lazy. "Reddy Fox and Jimmy Skunk and Billy Mink are sure to bring somethink I like, so what is the use of spending my time hunting for what someone else will get for me?" said he to himself. So Hooty the Owl went very early to the Lone Pine and hid among the thick branches where no one could see him.

Shadow the Weasel is sly and a thief and lives by his wits. So because he had rather steal than be honest, he too went to the midnight spread with nothing but his appetite.

Now Reddy Fox is also a glutton and very, very crafty. When he saw the plump duck brought by Billy Mink, his

mouth watered, for Reddy Fox is very, very fond of young spring ducks. So straightway he began to plan how he could get possession of Billy Mink's duck.

And when Billy Mink saw the fat trout Little Joe Otter had brought, his eyes danced and his heart swelled with envy, for Billy Mink is very, very fond of fish. At once he began to plan how he could secure that particular fat trout Little Joe Otter guarded so carefully.

Jimmy Skunk was quite contented with the eggs he had stolen from old Gray Goose — that is, he was until he saw the plump chicken Reddy Fox had brought from Farmer Brown's dooryard. Then suddenly his stomach became very empty, very empty indeed for chicken, and Jimmy Skunk began to think of a way to add the chicken of Reddy Fox to his own stolen eggs.

Because Reddy Fox is the largest he was given the place of honor at the head of the table under the Lone Pine. On his right sat Little Joe Otter and on his left Jerry Muskrat. Shadow the Weasel was next to Little Joe Otter, while right across from him was Jimmy Skunk. Peter Rabbit was next, sitting opposite his cousin, Jumper the Hare. At the extreme end, facing Reddy Fox, sat Billy Mink, with the plump duck right under his sharp little nose.

Boomer the Nighthawk excused himself on the plea that he needed exercise to aid digestion, and as he had brought nothing to the feast, his excuse was politely accepted.

Reddy Fox is very, very cunning, and his crafty brain had been busily working out a plan to get all these good things for himself. "Little brothers of the Green Meadows," began Reddy Fox, "we have

met here to-night for a feast of brotherly love."

Reddy Fox paused a moment to look hungrily at Billy Mink's duck. Billy Mink cast a longing eye at Little Joe Otter's trout, while Jimmy Skunk stole an envious glance at Reddy Fox's chicken.

"But there is one missing to make our joy complete," continued Reddy Fox. "Who has seen Bobby Coon?"

No one had seen Bobby Coon. Somehow happy-go-lucky Bobby Coon had been overlooked when the invitations were sent out.

"I move," continued Reddy Fox, "that because Billy Mink runs swiftly, and because he knows where Bobby Coon usually is to be found, he be appointed a committee of one to find Bobby Coon and bring him to the feast."

Now nothing could have been less to the liking of Billy Mink, but there was

nothing for him to do but to yield as gracefully as he could and go in search of Bobby Coon.

No sooner had Billy Mink disappeared down the Lone Little Path than Reddy Fox recalled a nest of grouse eggs he had seen that day under a big hemlock, and he proposed that inasmuch as Jimmy Skunk already wore stripes for having stolen a nest of eggs from Mrs. Grouse, he was just the one to go steal these eggs and bring them to the feast.

Of course there was nothing for Jimmy Skunk to do but to yield as gracefully as he could and go in search of the nest of eggs under the big hemlock.

No sooner had Jimmy Skunk started off than Reddy Fox remembered a big shining sucker Farmer Brown's boy had caught that afternoon and tossed among the rushes beside the Smiling Pool. Little Joe Otter listened and his mouth

watered and watered until he could sit still no longer. "If you please," said Little Joe Otter, "I'll run down to the Smiling Pool and get that sucker to add to the feast."

No sooner was Little Joe Otter out of sight than Reddy Fox was reminded of a field of carrots on the other side of the Green Meadows. Now Peter Rabbit and Jumper the Hare are very fond of tender young carrots and they volunteered to bring a supply for the feast. So away they hurried with big jumps down the Lone Little Path and out across the Green Meadows.

No sooner were Peter Rabbit and Jumper the Hare fairly started than Reddy Fox began to tell of some luscious sweet apples he had noticed under a wild apple tree a little way back on the hill. Now Jerry Muskrat is quite as fond of luscious sweet apples as of fresh-

water clams, so quietly slipping away, he set out in quest of the wild apple tree a little way back on the hill.

No sooner was Jerry Muskrat lost in the black shadows than Reddy Fox turned to speak to Shadow the Weasel. But Shadow the Weasel believes that a feast in the stomach is worth two banquets untasted, so while the others had been talking, he had quietly sucked dry the three big eggs stolen by Jimmy Skunk from old Gray Goose, and then because he is so slim and so quick and so sly, he slipped away without anyone seeing him.

So when Reddy Fox turned to speak to Shadow the Weasel, he found himself alone. At least he thought himself alone, and he smiled a wicked, selfish smile as he walked over to Billy Mink's duck. He was thinking how smart he had been to get rid of all the others, and

of how he would enjoy the feast all by himself.

As Reddy Fox stooped to pick up Billy Mink's duck, a great shadow dropped softly, oh so softly, out of the Lone Pine down onto the plump chicken. Then without the teeniest, weeniest bit of noise, it floated back into the Lone Pine and with it went the plump chicken.

Reddy Fox, still with his wicked, selfish smile, trotted back with Billy Mink's duck, but he dropped it in sheer surprise when he discovered that his plump chicken had disappeared. Now Reddy Fox is very suspicious, as people who are not honest themselves are very apt to be. So he left Billy Mink's duck where he had dropped it and trotted very, very softly up the Lone Little Path to try to catch the thief who had stolen his plump chicken.

No sooner was his back turned than down out of the Lone Pine floated the great shadow, and when a minute later Reddy Fox returned, Billy Mink's duck had also disappeared.

Reddy Fox could hardly believe his eyes. He didn't smile now. He was too angry and too frightened. Yes, Reddy Fox was frightened. He walked in a big circle round and round the place where the plump chicken and the duck had been, and the more he walked, the more suspicious he became. He wrinkled and wrinkled his little black nose in an effort to smell the intruder, but not a whiff could he get. All was as still and peaceful as could be. Little Joe Otter's trout lay shining in the moonlight. The big head of cabbage lay just where Peter Rabbit and Jumper the Hare had left it. Reddy Fox rubbed his eyes to make sure that he was not dreaming and that the

plump chicken and the duck were not there too.

Just then Bowser the Hound, over at Farmer Brown's, bayed at the moon. Reddy Fox always is nervous and by this time he was so fidgety that he couldn't stand still. When Bowser the Hound bayed at the moon Reddy Fox jumped a foot off the ground and whirled about in the direction of Farmer Brown's house. Then he remembered that Bowser the Hound is always chained up at night, so that he had nothing to fear from him.

After listening and looking a moment Reddy Fox decided that all was safe. "Well," said he to himself, "I'll have that fat trout anyway," and turned to get it.

But the fat trout he had seen a minute before shining in the moonlight had also disappeared. Reddy Fox looked and looked until his eyes nearly popped out

of his head. Then he did what all cowards do — ran home as fast as his legs could carry him.

Now of course Billy Mink didn't find Bobby Coon, and when he came back up the Lone Little Path he was very tired, very hungry and very cross. And of course Jimmy Skunk failed to find the nest of Mrs. Grouse, and Little Joe Otter could find no trace of the shining big sucker among the rushes beside the Smiling Pool. They also were very tired, very hungry and very cross.

When the three returned to the Lone Pine and found nothing there but the big head of cabbage, which none of them liked, the empty egg shells of old Gray Goose and Jerry Muskrat's clams, they straightway fell to accusing each other of having stolen the duck and the fat trout and the eggs and began to quarrel dreadfully.

Pretty soon up came Peter Rabbit and Jumper the Hare, who had failed to find the tender young carrots. And up came Jerry Muskrat, who had found no luscious sweet apples.

"Where is Reddy Fox?" asked Peter Rabbit.

Sure enough, where was Reddy Fox? Billy Mink and Little Joe Otter and Jimmy Skunk stopped quarreling and looked at each other.

"Reddy Fox is the thief!" they cried all together.

Peter Rabbit and Jumper the Hare and Jerry Muskrat agreed that Reddy Fox must be the thief, and had sent them all away on false errands that he might have the feast all to himself.

So because there was nothing else to do, Billy Mink and Little Joe Otter, tired and hungry and angry, started for their homes beside the Laughing Brook.

And Jimmy Skunk, also tired and hungry and angry, started off up the Crooked Little Path to look for some beetles.

But Peter Rabbit and Jumper the Hare sat down to enjoy the big head of cabbage, while close beside them sat Jerry Muskrat smacking his lips over his clams, they tasted so good. Mother Moon looked down and smiled and smiled, for she knew that each had a clear conscience, for they had done no harm to anyone.

And up in the thick top of the great pine Hooty the Owl nodded sleepily, for his stomach was very full of chicken and duck and trout, although he had not been invited to the party.

And this is why Reddy Fox has no true friends on the Green Meadows.

III

WHY PETER RABBIT'S EARS ARE LONG

III

WHY PETER RABBIT'S EARS ARE LONG

THE Merry Little Breezes of Old Mother West Wind were tired. Ever since she had turned them out of her big bag onto the Green Meadows early that morning they had romped and played tag and chased butterflies while Old Mother West Wind herself went to hunt for a raincloud which had wandered away before it had watered the thirsty little plants who were bravely trying to keep the Green Meadows lovely and truly green. Jolly, round, red Mr. Sun wore his broadest smile and the more he smiled the warmer it grew. Mr. Sun is never thirsty himself, never the least little bit, or perhaps he would

have helped Old Mother West Wind find the wandering raincloud.

The Merry Little Breezes threw themselves down on the edge of the Smiling Pool, where the rushes grow tall, and there they took turns rocking the cradle which held Mrs. Redwing's four babies.

Pretty soon one of the Merry Little Breezes, peeping through the rushes, spied Peter Rabbit sitting up very straight on the edge of the Green Meadows. His long ears were pointed straight up, his big eyes were very wide open and he seemed to be looking and listening with a great deal of curiosity.

"I wonder why it is that Peter Rabbit has such long ears," said the Merry Little Breeze.

"Chug-a-rum!" replied a great, deep voice right behind him.

All the Merry Little Breezes jumped up and ran through the rushes to the very

edge of the Smiling Pool. There on a great green lily pad sat Great-Grandfather Frog, his hands folded across his white and yellow waistcoat and his green coat shining spick and span.

"Chug-a-rum," said Grandfather Frog.

"Oh, Grandfather Frog," cried the Merry Little Breezes all together, "do tell us why it is that Peter Rabbit has such long ears."

Grandfather Frog cleared his throat. He looked to the east and cleared his throat again. Then he looked to the west, and cleared his throat. He looked north and he looked south, and each time he cleared his throat, but said nothing. Finally he folded his hands once more over his white and yellow waistcoat, and looking straight up at jolly, round, red Mr. Sun he remarked in his very deepest voice and to no one in particular:

"If I had four fat, foolish, green flies,

it is just possible that I might remember how it happens that Peter Rabbit has such long ears."

Then up jumped all the Merry Little Breezes and away they raced. Some of them went east, some of them went west, some of them went north, some of them went south, all looking for fat, foolish, green flies for Grandfather Frog.

By and by they came skipping back, one by one, to the edge of the Smiling Pool, each with a fat, foolish, green fly, and each stopping to give Mrs. Redwing's cradle a gentle push.

When Grandfather Frog had swallowed all the fat, foolish, green flies brought by the Merry Little Breezes, he settled himself comfortably on his big lily pad once more and began:

"Once upon a time, very long ago, when the world was young, Mr. Rabbit — not our Peter Rabbit, but his grandfather a

Mr. Rabbit had a great deal of curiosity, a very great deal indeed.

thousand times removed — had short ears like all the other meadow people, and also his four legs were all of the same length, just exactly the same length.

"Now Mr. Rabbit had a great deal of curiosity, a very great deal, indeed. He was forever pushing his prying little nose into other people's affairs, which, you know, is a most unpleasant habit. In fact, Mr. Rabbit had become a nuisance.

"Whenever Billy Mink stopped to pass the time of day with Jerry Muskrat they were sure to find Mr. Rabbit standing close by, listening to all they said. If Johnny Chuck's mother ran over to have a few minutes' chat with Jimmy Skunk's mother, the first thing they knew Mr. Rabbit would be squatting down in the grass right behind them.

"The older he grew the worse Mr. Rabbit became. He would spend his evenings going from house to house,

tiptoeing softly up to the windows to listen to what the folks inside were saying. And the more he heard the more Mr. Rabbit's curiosity grew.

"Now, like most people who meddle in other folks' affairs, Mr. Rabbit had no time to tend to his own business. His cabbage patch grew up to weeds. His house leaked, his fences fell to pieces, and altogether his was the worst looking place on the Green Meadows.

"Worse still, Mr. Rabbit was a trouble maker. He just couldn't keep his tongue still. And like most gossips, he never could tell the exact truth.

"Dear me! dear me!" said Grandfather Frog, shaking his head solemnly. "Things had come to a dreadful pass on the Green Meadows. Reddy Fox and Bobby Coon never met without fighting. Jimmy Skunk and Johnny Chuck turned their backs on each other. Jerry Muskrat,

Little Joe Otter, and Billy Mink called each other bad names. All because Mr. Rabbit had told so many stories that were not true.

"Now when old Mother Nature visited the Green Meadows she soon saw what a dreadful state all the meadow people were in, and she began to inquire how it all came about.

"'It's all because of Mr. Rabbit,' said Reddy Fox.

"'No one is to blame bu Mr. Rabbit,' said Striped Chipmunk.

"Everywhere old Mother Nature inquired it was the same — Mr. Rabbit, Mr. Rabbit, Mr. Rabbit.

"So then old Mother Nature sent for blustering great Mr. North W'r , who is very strong. And she sen for Mr. Rabbit.

"Mr. Rabbit trembled in shoes when he got old Moth Nat 's mes-

sage. He would have liked to run away and hide. But he did not dare do that, for he knew that there was nowhere he could hide that Mother Nature would not find him sooner or later. And besides, his curiosity would give him no peace. He just *had* to know what old Mother Nature wanted

" So Peter Rabbit put on his best suit, which was very shabby, and set out for the Lone Pine to see what old Mother Nature wanted. When he got there, he found all the little people of the Green Meadows and all the little folks of the Green Forest there before him. There were Reddy Fox, Johnny Chuck, Striped Chipmunk, Happy Jack Squirrel, Mr. Black Snake, old Mr. Crow, Sammy Jay, Billy Mink, Little Joe Otter, Jerry Muskrat, Spotty the Turtle, old King Bear, his cousin, Mr. Coon, and all the other little people.

"When he saw all who had gathered under the Lone Pine, and how they all looked crossly at him, Mr. Rabbit was so frightened that his heart went pit-a-pat, pit-a-pat, pit-a-pat, and he wanted more than ever to run away. But he didn't dare to. No, Sir, he didn't dare to. And then he was so curious to know what it all meant that he wouldn't have run if he had dared.

"Old Mother Nature made Mr. Rabbit sit up on an old log where all could see him. Then in turn she asked each present who was the cause of all the trouble on the Green Meadows. And each in turn answered 'Mr. Rabbit.'

"'Mr. Rabbit,' said old Mother Nature, 'you are lazy, for your cabbage patch has all gone to weeds. You are shiftless, for your house leaks. You are a sneak, for you creep up where you are not wanted and listen to things which do

not concern you. You are a thief, for you steal the secrets of others. You are a prevaricator, for you tell things which are not so. Mr. Rabbit, you are all these — a lazy, shiftless sneak, thief and prevaricator.'

"It was dreadful. Mother Nature paused, and Mr. Rabbit felt oh so ashamed. He did not look up, but he felt, he just *felt*, all the eyes of all the little meadow people and forest folk burning right into him. So he hung his head and two great tears fell splash, right at his feet. You see Mr. Rabbit wasn't altogether bad. It was just this dreadful curiosity.

"Old Mother Nature knew this and down in her heart she loved Mr. Rabbit and was oh so sorry for him.

"'Mr. Rabbit,' continued old Mother Nature, 'because your curiosity is so great, your ears shall be made long, that

every one who sees you may know that it is not safe to talk when you are near. Because you are a sneak and steal up to people unseen, your hind legs shall be made long, so that whenever you sit up straight you will be tall and every one can see you, and whenever you run, you will go with great jumps, and every one will know who it is running away. And because you are shiftless and your house leaks, you will hereafter live in a hole in the ground.'

"Then old Mother Nature took Mr. Rabbit by his two ears and big, strong Mr. North Wind took Peter Rabbit by his hind legs, and they both pulled. And when they put him down Peter Rabbit's ears and his hind legs were long, many times longer than they used to be. When he tried to run away to hide his shame, he found that the only way he could go was with great jumps, and you

may be sure he jumped as fast as he could.

"And ever since that long ago time, when the world was young, rabbits have had long ears and long hind legs, all because of the curiosity of their grandfather a thousand times removed. And now you know why Peter Rabbit's ears are long, and why he is always sitting up and listening," concluded Great-Grandfather Frog.

"Thank you, thank you, Grandfather Frog!" shouted all the Merry Little Breezes, and raced away to help old Mother West Wind drive up the wandering raincloud, which she had found at last.

IV

REDDY FOX DISOBEYS

IV

REDDY FOX DISOBEYS

ON the brow of the hill by the Lone Pine sat Reddy Fox. Every few moments he pointed his little black nose up at the round, yellow moon and barked. Way over across the broad White Meadows, which in summer time are green, you know, in the dooryard of Farmer Brown's house, Bowser the Hound sat and barked at the moon, too.

"Yap-yap-yap," barked Reddy Fox, as loud as he could.

"Bow-wow-wow," said Bowser the Hound in his deepest voice.

Then both would listen and watch the million little stars twinkle and twinkle in the frosty sky. Now just why Reddy

Fox should bark at the moon he did not know. He just had to. Every night for a week he had sat at the foot of the Lone Pine and barked and barked until his throat was sore. Every night old Mother Fox had warned him that noisy children would come to no good end, and every night Reddy had promised that he would bark no more. But every night when the first silver flood of witching light crept over the hill and cast strange shadows from the naked branches of the trees, Reddy forgot all about his promise. Deep down under his little red coat was a strange feeling which he could not explain. He simply *must* bark, so up to the Lone Pine he would go and yap and yap and yap, until all the little meadow people who were not asleep knew just where Reddy Fox was.

Bowser the Hound knew, too, and he made up his mind that Reddy Fox was

making fun of him. Now Bowser did not like to be made fun of any more than little boys and girls do, and he made up his mind that if ever he could break his chain, or that if ever Farmer Brown forgot to chain him up, he would teach Reddy Fox a lesson that Reddy would never forget.

"Yap-yap-yap," barked Reddy Fox, and then listened to hear Bowser's deep voice reply. But this time there was no reply. Reddy listened, and listened, and then tried it again. Way off on a distant hill he could hear Hooty the Owl. Close by him Jack Frost was busy snapping sticks. Down on the White Meadows he could see Jimmy Skunk prowling about. Once he heard a rooster crow sleepily in Farmer Brown's hen-house, but he thought of Bowser the Hound, and though his mouth watered, he did not dare risk a closer acquaintance with the

big dog. So he sat still and barked, and pretty soon he forgot all else but the moon and the sound of his own voice.

Now Bowser the Hound had managed to slip his collar. "Aha," thought Bowser, "now I'll teach Reddy Fox to make fun of me," and like a shadow he slipped through the fence and across the White Meadows towards the Lone Pine.

Reddy Fox had just barked for the hundreth time when he heard a twig crack just back of him. It had a different sound from the noisy crack of Jack Frost, and Reddy stopped a yap right in the middle and whirled about to see what it might be. There was Bowser the Hound almost upon him, his eyes flashing fire, his great, red jaws wide open, and every hair on his back bristling with rage.

Reddy Fox didn't wait to say "Good evening," or to see more. Oh, no! He

turned a back somersault and away he sped over the hard, snowy crust as fast as his legs could carry him. Bowser baying at the moon he liked to hear, but Bowser baying at his heels was another matter, and Reddy ran as he had never run before. Down across the White Meadows he sped, Bowser frightening all the echoes with the roar of his big voice as he followed in full cry.

How Reddy did wish that he had minded Mother Fox! How safe and snug and warm was his home under the roots of the old hickory tree, and how he did wish that he was safely there! But it would never do to go there now, for that would tell Bowser where he lived, and Bowser would take Farmer Brown there, and that would be the end of Reddy Fox and of Mother Fox and of all the brother and sister foxes.

So Reddy twisted and turned, and ran

this way and ran that way, and the longer he ran, the shorter his breath grew. It was coming in great pants now. His bushy tail, of which he was so proud, had become very heavy. How Reddy Fox did wish and wish that he had minded Mother Fox! He twisted and turned, and doubled this way and that way, and all the time Bowser the Hound got closer and closer.

Now way off on the hill behind the White Meadows Mother Fox had been hunting for her supper. She had heard the "Yap-yap-yap" of Reddy Fox as he barked at the moon, and she had heard Bowser baying over in the barnyard of Farmer Brown. Then she had heard the "yap" of Reddy Fox cut short in the middle and the roar of Bowser's big voice as he started to chase Reddy Fox. She knew that Reddy could run fast, but she also knew that Bowser the Hound

had a wonderful nose, and that Bowser would never give up. So Mother Fox pattered down the Crooked Little Path onto the White Meadows, where she could see the chase. When she got near enough, she barked twice to tell Reddy that she would help him.

Now Reddy Fox was so tired that he was almost in despair when he heard Mother Fox bark. But he knew that Mother Fox was so wise, and she had so often fooled Bowser the Hound, that if he could hold out just a little longer she would help him. So for a few minutes he ran faster than ever and he gained a long way on Bowser the Hound. As he passed a shock of corn that had been left standing on the White Meadows, Mother Fox stepped out from behind it. "Go home, Reddy Fox," said she, sharply, "go home and stay there until I come." Then she deliberately sat down in front

of the shock of corn to wait until Bowser the Hound should come in sight.

Now Bowser the Hound kept his eyes and nose on the track of Reddy Fox, looking up only once in a while to see where he was going, so he did not see Reddy Fox slip behind the corn shock, and when he did look up, he saw only Mother Fox sitting there waiting for him.

Now Bowser the Hound thinks slowly. When he saw old Mother Fox sitting there, he did not stop to think that it was not Reddy Fox whom he had been following, or he would have known better than to waste his time following old Mother Fox. He would have just hunted around until he had found where Reddy had gone to. But Bowser the Hound thinks slowly. When he saw old Mother Fox sitting there, he thought it was Reddy Fox and that now he had him.

With a great roar of his big voice, he

sprang forward. Mother Fox waited until he was almost upon her, then springing to one side, she trotted off a little way. At once Bowser the Hound started after her. She pretended to be very tired. Every time he rushed forward she managed to just slip out of his grasp.

Little by little she led him across the White Meadows back towards Farmer Brown's barnyard. Pretty soon old Mother Fox began to run as fast as she could, and that is very fast indeed. She left Bowser the Hound a long, long way behind. When she came to a stone wall she jumped up on the stone wall and ran along it, just like a squirrel. Every once in a while she would make a long jump and then trot along a little way again. She knew that stones do not carry the scent well, and that Bowser the Hound would have hard work to smell her on the

stone wall. Way down at the end of the pasture an old apple tree stretched a long limb out towards the stone wall. When she got opposite to this she jumped onto this long limb and ran up into the tree. There in the crotch, close to the trunk, she sat and watched.

Bowser the Hound, making a tremendous noise, followed her trail up to the stone wall. Then he was puzzled. He sniffed this way, and he sniffed that way, but he could not tell where Mother Fox had disappeared to. He looked up at old Mother Moon and bayed and bayed, but old Mother Moon did not help him a bit. Then he jumped over the stone wall and looked, and looked, and smelled, and smelled, but no track of Mother Fox could he find. Then he ran up along the stone wall a little way, and then down along the stone wall a little way, but still he could not find a

track of Mother Fox. The longer he hunted, the angrier he grew.

Old Mother Fox, sitting in the apple tree, watched him and laughed and laughed to herself. Then when she grew tired of watching him, she made a long jump out into the field and trotted off home to punish Reddy Fox for his disobedience. When she got there she found Reddy Fox very much ashamed, very tired and very sorrowful, and since that time Reddy Fox has never barked at the moon.

V

STRIPED CHIPMUNK'S POCKETS

V

STRIPED CHIPMUNK'S POCKETS

IT was one of Striped Chipmunk's busy days. Every day is a busy day with Striped Chipmunk at this season of the year, for the sweet acorns are ripe and the hickory nuts rattle down whenever Old Mother West Wind shakes the trees, while every night Jack Frost opens chestnut burrs just to see the squirrels scamper for the plump brown nuts the next morning.

So Striped Chipmunk was very busy, very busy indeed! He whisked in and out of the old stone wall along one edge of the Green Meadows. Back and forth, back and forth, sometimes to the old

hickory tree, sometimes to the hollow chestnut tree, sometimes to the great oak on the edge of the Green Forest Striped Chipmunk scampered.

Old Mother West Wind, coming down from the Purple Hills very early in the morning, had found Striped Chipmunk up before her and hard at work. Later, when jolly, round, red Mr. Sun had climbed up into the sky, the Merry Little Breezes had spied Striped Chipmunk whisking along the old stone wall and had raced over to play with him, for the Merry Little Breezes are very fond of Striped Chipmunk. They got there just in time to see him disappear under a great stone in the old wall. In a minute he was out again and off as fast as he could go to the old hickory tree.

"Oh, Striped Chipmunk, come play with us," shouted the Merry Little Breezes, running after him.

But Striped Chipmunk just flirted his funny little tail and winked with both his bright eyes at them.

"Busy! busy! busy!" said Striped Chipmunk, hurrying along as fast as his short legs could take him.

The Merry Little Breezes laughed, and one of them, dancing ahead, pulled the funny little tail of Striped Chipmunk.

"It's a beautiful day; do come and play with us," cried the Merry Little Breeze.

But Striped Chipmunk flirted his tail over his back once more.

"Busy! busy! busy!" he shouted over his shoulder and ran faster than ever.

In a few minutes he was back again, but such a queer-looking fellow as he was! His head was twice as big as it had been before and you would hardly have known that it was Striped Chipmunk

but for the saucy way he twitched his funny little tail and the spry way he scampered along the old stone wall.

"Oh, Striped Chipmunk's got the mumps!" shouted the Merry Little Breezes.

But Striped Chipmunk said never a word. He couldn't. He ran faster than ever until he disappeared under the big stone. When he popped his head out again he was just his usual saucy little self.

"Say, Striped Chipmunk," cried the Merry Little Breezes, rushing over to him, "tell us how you happen to have pockets in your cheeks."

But Striped Chipmunk just snapped his bright eyes at them and said "Busy! busy! busy!" as he scuttled over to the hollow chestnut tree.

The Merry Little Breezes saw that it was no use at all to try to tempt Striped

Chipmunk to play with them or to answer questions.

"I tell you what," cried one, "let's go ask Great-Grandfather Frog how Striped Chipmunk happens to have pockets in his cheeks. He'll know."

So away they started, after they had raced over to the big hollow chestnut tree and sent a shower of brown nuts rattling down to Striped Chipmunk from the burrs that Jack Frost had opened the night before.

"Good-bye, Striped Chipmunk," they shouted as they romped across the Green Meadows. And Striped Chipmunk stopped long enough to shout "Good-bye" before he filled his pockets with the brown nuts.

Old Grandfather Frog sat on his big green lily pad blinking in the sun. It was very still, very, very still indeed. Suddenly out of the brown bulrushes burst

the Merry Little Breezes and surrounded old Grandfather Frog. And every one of them had brought to him a fat, foolish, green fly.

Grandfather's big goggly eyes sparkled and he gave a funny little hop up into the air as he caught each foolish green fly. When the last one was safely inside his white and yellow waistcoat he settled himself comfortably on the big green lily pad and folded his hands over the foolish green flies.

"Chug-a-rum!" said Grandfather Frog. "What is it you want this morning?"

"Oh, Grandfather Frog," cried the Merry Little Breezes, "tell us how it happens that Striped Chipmunk has pockets in his cheeks. Do tell us, Grandfather Frog. Please do!"

"Chug-a-rum," said Grandfather Frog. "How should I know?"

"But you do know, Grandfather Frog, you know you do. Please tell us!" cried the Merry Little Breezes as they settled themselves among the rushes.

And presently Grandfather Frog began:

"Once upon a time — a long, long while ago —"

"When the world was young?" asked a mischievous little Breeze.

Grandfather Frog pretended to be very much put out by the interruption, and tried to look very severe. But the Merry Little Breezes were all giggling, so that presently he had to smile too.

"Yes," said he, "it was when the world was young, before old King Bear became king. Mr. Chipmunk, Striped Chipmunk's great-great-great-grandfather a thousand times removed, was the smallest of the squirrels, just as Striped Chipmunk is now. But he didn't mind that, not the least little bit.

Mr. Gray Squirrel was four times as big and had a handsome tail, Mr. Fox Squirrel was four times as big and he also had a handsome tail, Mr. Red Squirrel was twice as big and he thought his tail was very good to see. But Mr. Chipmunk didn't envy his big cousins their fine tails; not he! You see he had himself a beautiful striped coat of which he was very proud and which he thought much more to be desired than a big tail.

"So Mr. Chipmunk went his way happy and contented and he was such a merry little fellow and so full of fun and cut such funny capers that everybody loved Mr. Chipmunk.

"One day, when the nights were cool and all the trees had put on their brilliant colors, old Mother Nature sent word down across the Green Meadows that every squirrel should gather for her and store away until she came a thousand

nuts. Now the squirrels had grown fat and lazy through the long summer, all but Mr. Chipmunk, who frisked about so much that he had no chance to grow fat.

"Mr. Gray Squirrel grumbled. Mr. Fox Squirrel grumbled. Mr. Red Squirrel grumbled. But they didn't dare disobey old Mother Nature, so they all set out, each to gather a thousand nuts. And Mr. Chipmunk alone was pleasant and cheerful.

"When they reached the nut trees, what do you suppose they discovered? Why, that they had been so greedy that they had eaten most of the nuts and it was going to be hard work to find and store a thousand nuts for old Mother Nature. Then they began to hurry, did Mr. Gray Squirrel and Mr. Fox Squirrel and Mr. Red Squirrel, each trying to make sure of his thousand nuts. They

quarreled and they fought over the nuts on the ground and even up in the trees. And because they were so big and so strong, they pushed Mr. Chipmunk this way and they pushed him that way and often just as he was going to pick up a fat nut one of them would knock him over and make off with the prize.

"Poor Mr. Chipmunk kept his temper and was as polite as ever, but how he did work! His cousins are great climbers and could get the nuts still left on the trees, but Mr. Chipmunk is a poor climber, so he had to be content with those on the ground. Of course he could carry only one nut at a time and his legs were so short that he had to run as fast as ever he could to store each nut in his secret store-house and get back for another. And while the others quarreled and fought, he hurried back and forth, back and forth, from early morning until

jolly, round, red Mr. Sun pulled his night cap on behind the Purple Hills, hunting for nuts and putting them away in his secret store-house.

" But the nuts grew scarcer and scarcer on the ground and harder to find, for the other squirrels were picking them up too, and then they did not have so far to carry them.

" Sometimes one of his cousins up in the trees would drop a nut, but Mr. Chipmunk never would take it, not even when he was having hard work to find any, ' for,' said he to himself, ' if my cousin drops a nut, it is his nut just the same.'

" Finally Mr. Gray Squirrel announced that he had got his thousand nuts. Then Mr. Fox Squirrel announced that he had got his thousand nuts. The next day Mr. Red Squirrel stopped hunting because he had his thousand nuts.

" But Mr. Chipmunk had hardly more

than half as many. And that night he made a dreadful discovery — some one had found his secret store-house and had *stolen* some of his precious nuts.

" ' It's of no use to cry over what can't be helped,' said Mr. Chipmunk, and the next morning he bravely started out again. He had worked so hard that he had grown thinner and thinner until now he was only a shadow of his old self. But he was as cheerful as ever and kept right on hunting and hunting for stray nuts. Mr. Gray Squirrel and Mr. Fox Squirrel and Mr. Red Squirrel sat around and rested and made fun of him. Way up in the tops of the tallest trees a few nuts still clung, but his cousins did not once offer to go up and shake them down for Mr. Chipmunk

" And then old Mother Nature came down across the Green Meadows. First Mr. Gray Squirrel took her to his store-

house and she counted his thousand nuts. Then Mr. Fox Squirrel led her to his store-house and she counted his thousand nuts Then Mr. Red Squirrel showed her his store-house and she counted his thousand nuts.

"Last of all Mr. Chipmunk led her to his secret store-house and showed her the pile of nuts he had worked so hard to get. Old Mother Nature didn't need to count them to see that there were not a thousand there.

"'I've done the best I could,' said Mr. Chipmunk bravely, and he trembled all over, he was so tired.

"Old Mother Nature said never a word but went out on the Green Meadows and sent the Merry Little Breezes to call together all the little meadow people and all the little forest folks. When they had all gathered before her she suddenly turned to Mr. Gray Squirrel.

"'Go bring me a hundred nuts from your store-house,' said she.

"Then she turned to Mr. Fox Squirrel.

"'Go bring me a hundred nuts from your store-house,' said she.

"Last of all she called Mr. Red Squirrel out where all could see him. Mr. Red Squirrel crept out very slowly. His teeth chattered and his tail, of which he was so proud, dragged on the ground, for you see Mr. Red Squirrel had something on his mind.

"Then old Mother Nature told how she had ordered each squirrel to get and store for her a thousand nuts. She told just how selfish Mr. Gray Squirrel and Mr. Fox Squirrel had been. She told just how hard Mr. Chipmunk had worked and then she told how part of his precious store had been stolen.

"'And there,' said old Mother Nature

in a loud voice so that every one should hear, 'there is the thief!'

"Then she commanded Mr. Red Squirrel to go to his store-house and bring her half of the biggest and best nuts he had there!

"Mr. Red Squirrel sneaked off with his head hanging, and began to bring the nuts. And as he tramped back and forth, back and forth, all the little meadow people and all the little forest folks pointed their fingers at him and cried 'Thief! Thief! Thief!'

"When all the nuts had been brought to her by Mr. Gray Squirrel and Mr. Fox Squirrel and Mr. Red Squirrel, old Mother Nature gathered them all up and put them in the secret store-house of Mr. Chipmunk. Then she set Mr. Chipmunk up on an old stump where all could see him and she said:

"'Mr. Chipmunk, because you have

been faithful, because you have been cheerful, because you have done your best, henceforth you shall have two pockets, one in each cheek, so that you can carry two nuts at once, that you may not have to work so hard the next time I tell you to store a thousand nuts.'

"And all the little meadow people and all the little forest folks shouted 'Hurrah for Mr. Chipmunk!' All but his cousins, Mr. Gray Squirrel and Mr. Fox Squirrel and Mr. Red Squirrel, who hid themselves for shame.

"And ever since that time long ago, when the world was young, the Chipmunks have had pockets in their cheeks.

"You can't fool old Mother Nature," concluded Great-Grandfather Frog. "No, Sir, you can't fool old Mother Nature and it's no use to try."

"Thank you, thank you," cried the

Merry Little Breezes, clapping their hands. Then they all raced across the Green Meadows to shake down some more nuts for Striped Chipmunk.

VI

REDDY FOX, THE BOASTER

VI

REDDY FOX, THE BOASTER

JOHNNY CHUCK waddled down the Lone Little Path across the Green Meadows. Johnny Chuck was very fat and rolly-poly. His yellow brown coat fitted him so snugly that it seemed as if it must burst. Johnny Chuck was feeling very happy — very happy indeed, for you see Johnny Chuck long ago found the best thing in the world, which is contentment.

Jolly, round, red Mr. Sun, looking down from the sky, smiled and smiled to see Johnny Chuck waddling down the Lone Little Path, for he loved the merry-hearted little fellow, as do all the little

meadow people — all but Reddy Fox, for Reddy Fox has not forgotten the surprise Johnny Chuck once gave him and how he called him a " 'fraid cat."

Once in a while Johnny Chuck stopped to brush his coat carefully, for he is very particular about his appearance, is Johnny Chuck. By and by he came to the old butternut tree down by the Smiling Pool. He could see it a long time before he reached it, and up in the top of it he could see Blacky the Crow flapping his wings and cawing at the top of his voice.

" There must be something going on," said Johnny Chuck to himself, and began to waddle faster. He looked so very queer when he tried to hurry that jolly, round, red Mr. Sun smiled more than ever.

When he was almost to the old butternut tree Johnny Chuck sat up very

straight so that his head came just above the tall meadow grasses beside the Lone Little Path. He could see the Merry Little Breezes dancing and racing under the old butternut tree and having such a good time! And he could see the long ears of Peter Rabbit standing up straight above the tall meadow grasses. One of the Merry Little Breezes spied Johnny Chuck.

"Hurry up, Johnny Chuck!" he shouted, and Johnny Chuck hurried.

When he reached the old butternut tree he was all out of breath. He was puffing and blowing and he was so warm that he wished just for a minute, a single little minute, that he could swim like Billy Mink and Jerry Muskrat and Little Joe Otter, so that he could jump into the Smiling Pool and cool off.

"Hello, Johnny Chuck!" shouted Peter Rabbit.

"Hello yourself, and see how you like it!" replied Johnny Chuck.

"Hello myself!" said Peter Rabbit.

And then because it was so very foolish everybody laughed. It is a good thing to feel foolishly happy on a beautiful sunshiny day, especially down on the Green Meadows.

Jimmy Skunk was there. He was feeling very, very good indeed, was Jimmy Skunk, for he had found some very fine beetles for his breakfast.

Little Joe Otter was there, and Billy Mink and Jerry Muskrat and Happy Jack Squirrel, and of course Reddy Fox was there. Oh my, yes, of course Reddy Fox was there! Reddy Fox never misses a chance to show off. He was wearing his very newest red coat and his whitest waistcoat. He had brushed his tail till it looked very handsome, and every few minutes he would turn and admire it.

Reddy Fox thought himself a very fine gentleman. He admired himself and he wanted every one else to admire him.

"Let's do stunts," said Peter Rabbit. "I can jump farther than anybody here!"

Then Peter Rabbit jumped a tremendously long jump. Then everybody jumped, everybody but Reddy Fox. Even Johnny Chuck jumped, and because he was so rolly-poly he tumbled over and over and everybody laughed and Johnny Chuck laughed loudest of all.

And because his hind legs are long and meant for jumping Peter Rabbit had jumped farther than any one else.

"I can climb to the top of the old butternut tree quicker than anybody else," cried Happy Jack Squirrel, and away he started with Bobby Coon and Billy Mink after him, for though Billy Mink is a famous swimmer and can run swiftly, he can also climb when he has to.

But Happy Jack Squirrel was at the top of the old butternut tree almost before the others had started.

The Merry Little Breezes clapped their hands and everybody shouted for Happy Jack Squirrel, everybody but Reddy Fox.

"I can swim faster than anybody here," shouted Little Joe Otter.

In a flash three little brown coats splashed into the Smiling Pool so suddenly that they almost upset Great-Grandfather Frog watching from his big green lily pad. They belonged to Little Joe Otter, Billy Mink and Jerry Muskrat. Across the Smiling Pool and back again they raced and Little Joe Otter was first out on the bank.

"Hurrah for Little Joe Otter!" shouted Blacky the Crow.

And everybody shouted "Hurrah!" Everybody but Reddy Fox.

"What can you do, Jimmy Skunk?" asked Peter Rabbit, dancing up and down, he was so excited.

Jimmy Skunk yawned lazily.

"I can throw a wonderful perfume farther than anybody here," said Jimmy Skunk.

"We know it! We know it!" shouted the Merry Little Breezes as everybody tumbled heels over head away from Jimmy Skunk, even Reddy Fox. "But please don't!"

And Jimmy Skunk didn't.

Then they all came back, Reddy Fox carefully brushing his handsome red coat which had become sadly mussed, he had fled in such a hurry.

Now for the first time in his life Johnny Chuck began to feel just a wee, wee bit discontented. What was there he could do better than any one else? He couldn't jump and he couldn't climb and he

couldn't swim. He couldn't even run fast, because he was so fat and round and rolly-poly. He quite forgot that he was so sunny-hearted and good-natured that everybody loved him, everybody but Reddy Fox.

Just then Reddy Fox began to boast, for Reddy Fox is a great boaster. "Pooh!" said Reddy Fox, "pooh! Anybody could jump if their legs were made for jumping. And what's the good of climbing trees anyway? Now *I* can run faster than anybody here — faster than anybody in the whole world!" said Reddy Fox, puffing himself out.

"Chug-a-rum," said Grandfather Frog. "You can't beat Spotty the Turtle."

Then everyone shouted and rolled over and over in the grass, they were so tickled, for every one remembered how Spotty the Turtle had once won a race from Reddy Fox.

For a minute Reddy Fox looked very foolish. Then he lost his temper, which is a very unwise thing to do, for it is hard to find again. He swelled himself out until every hair stood on end and he looked twice as big as he did before. He strutted up and down and glared at each in turn.

"And I'm not afraid of any living thing on the Green Meadows!" boasted Reddy Fox.

"Chug-a-rum," said Grandfather Frog. "Do I see Bowser the Hound?"

Every hair on Reddy Fox suddenly fell back into place. He whirled about nervously and anxiously looked over the Green Meadows. Then everybody shouted again and rolled over and over in the grass and held on to their sides, for you see Bowser the Hound wasn't there at all.

But everybody took good care to keep

away from Reddy Fox, everybody but Johnny Chuck. He just sat still and chuckled and chuckled till his fat sides shook.

"What are you laughing at?" demanded Reddy Fox.

"I was just thinking," said Johnny Chuck, "that though you can run so fast, you can't even catch me."

Reddy Fox just glared at him for a minute, he was so mad. Then he sprang straight at Johnny Chuck.

"I'll show you!" he snarled.

Now Johnny Chuck had been sitting close beside a hole that Grandfather Chuck had dug a long time before and which was empty. In a flash Johnny Chuck disappeared head first in the hole. Now the hole was too small for Reddy Fox to enter, but he was so angry that he straightway began to dig it larger. My, how the sand did fly! It poured out

behind Reddy Fox in a stream of shining yellow.

Johnny Chuck ran down the long tunnel underground until he reached the end. Then when he heard Reddy Fox digging and knew that he was really coming, Johnny Chuck began to dig, too, only instead of digging down he dug up towards the sunshine and the blue sky.

My, how his short legs did fly and his stout little claws dug into the soft earth! His little forepaws flew so fast that if you had been there you could hardly have seen them at all. And with his strong hind legs he kicked the sand right back into the face of Reddy Fox.

All the little meadow people gathered around the hole where Johnny Chuck and Reddy Fox had disappeared. They were very anxious, very anxious indeed. Would Reddy Fox catch Johnny Chuck? And what would he do to him? Was all their

fun to end in something terrible to sunny-hearted, merry Johnny Chuck, whom everybody loved?

All of a sudden, pop! right out of the solid earth among the daisies and buttercups, just like a jack-in-the-box, came Johnny Chuck! He looked very warm and a little tired, but he was still chuckling as he scampered across to another hole of Grandfather Chuck's.

By and by something else crawled out of the hole Johnny Chuck had made. Could it be Reddy Fox? Where were his white waistcoat and beautiful red coat? And was that thing dragging behind him his splendid tail?

He crept out of the hole and then just lay down and panted for breath. He was almost too tired to move. Then he began to spit sand out of his mouth and blow it out of his nose and try to wipe it out of his eyes. The long hair of his fine coat

Then everybody shouted, "Haw! haw! haw!"

was filled full of sand and no one would ever have guessed that this was Reddy Fox.

"Haw! haw! haw!" shouted Blacky the Crow.

Then everybody shouted "Haw! haw! haw!" and began to roll in the grass and hold on to their sides once more; everybody but Reddy Fox. When he could get his breath he didn't look this way or that way, but just sneaked off to his home under the big hickory.

And when Old Mother West Wind came with her big bag to take the Merry Little Breezes to their home behind the Purple Hills, Johnny Chuck waddled back up the Lone Little Path chuckling to himself, for that little feeling of discontent was all gone. He had found that after all he could do something better than anybody else on the Green Meadows, for in his heart he knew that none could dig so fast as he.

VII

JOHNNY CHUCK'S SECRET

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JOHNNY CHUCK pushed up the last bit of gravel from the hole he had dug between the roots of the old apple tree in a corner of the Green Meadows. He smoothed it down on the big, yellow mound he had made in front of his door. Then he sat up very straight on top of the mound, brushed his coat, shook the sand from his trousers and carefully cleaned his hands.

After he had rested a bit, he turned around and looked at his new home, for that is what it was, although he had not come there to live yet, and no one knew of it, no one but jolly, round, red Mr. Sun, who, peeping between the branches

of the old apple tree, had caught Johnny Chuck at work. But *he* wouldn't tell, not jolly Mr. Sun! Looking down from the blue sky every day he sees all sorts of queer things and he learns all kinds of secrets, does Mr. Sun, but he never, never tells. No, Sir! Mr. Sun never tells one of them, not even to Old Mother West Wind when at night they go down together behind the Purple Hills.

So jolly, round, red Mr. Sun just smiled and smiled when he discovered Johnny Chuck's secret, for that is just what the new home under the apple tree was — a secret. Not even the Merry Little Breezes, who find out almost everything, had discovered it.

Johnny Chuck chuckled to himself as he planned a back door, a beautiful back door, hidden behind a tall clump of meadow grass where no one would think to look for a door. When he had satisfied

himself as to just where he would put it, he once more sat up very straight on his nice, new mound and looked this way and looked that way to be sure that no one was near. Then he started for his old home along a secret little path he had made for himself.

Pretty soon he came to the Lone Little Path that went past his own home. He danced and he skipped along the Lone Little Path, and, because he was so happy, he tried to turn a somersault. But Johnny Chuck was so round and fat and rolly-poly that he just tumbled over in a heap.

"Well, well, well! What's the matter with you?" said a voice close beside him before he could pick himself up. It was Jimmy Skunk, who was out looking for some beetles for his dinner.

Johnny Chuck scrambled to his feet and looked foolish, very foolish indeed.

"There's nothing the matter with me, Jimmy Skunk," said Johnny. "There's nothing the matter with me. It's just because I've got a secret."

"A secret!" cried Jimmy Skunk. "What is it?"

"Yes, a secret, a really, truly secret," said Johnny Chuck, and looked very important.

"Tell me, Johnny Chuck. Come on, tell just *me*, and then we'll have the secret together," begged Jimmy Skunk.

Now Johnny Chuck was so tickled with his secret that it seemed as if he *must* share it with some one. He just couldn't keep it to himself any longer.

"You won't tell any one?" said Johnny Chuck.

Jimmy Skunk promised that he wouldn't tell a soul.

"Cross your heart," commanded Johnny Chuck.

Jimmy Skunk crossed his heart.

Then Johnny Chuck looked this way and looked that way to be sure that no one was listening. Finally he whispered in Jimmy Skunk's ear:

"I've got a new home under the old apple tree in a corner of the Green Meadows," said Johnny Chuck.

Of course Jimmy Skunk was very much surprised and very much interested, so Johnny Chuck told him all about it.

"Now, remember, it's a secret," said Johnny Chuck, as Jimmy Skunk started off down the Lone Little Path across the Green Meadows, to look for some beetles.

"I'll remember," said Jimmy Skunk.

"And don't tell!" called Johnny Chuck.

Jimmy Skunk promised that he wouldn't tell. Then Johnny Chuck started off up the Lone Little Path,

whistling, and Jimmy Skunk trotted down the Lone Little Path onto the Green Meadows.

Jimmy Skunk was thinking so much about Johnny Chuck's new home that he quite forgot to look for beetles, and he almost ran into Peter Rabbit.

"Hello, Jimmy Skunk," said Peter Rabbit, "can't you see where you are going? It must be you have something on your mind; what is it?"

"I was thinking of Johnny Chuck's new home," said Jimmy Skunk.

"Johnny Chuck's new home!" exclaimed Peter Rabbit. "Has Johnny Chuck got a new home? Where is it?"

"Under the roots of the old apple tree in a corner of the Green Meadows," said Jimmy Skunk, and then he clapped both hands over his mouth. You see he hadn't really meant to tell. It just slipped out.

"Oh, but it's a secret!" cried Jimmy Skunk. "It's a secret, and you mustn't tell. I guess Johnny Chuck won't mind if you know, Peter Rabbit, but you mustn't tell any one else." Peter Rabbit promised he wouldn't.

Now Peter Rabbit is very inquisitive, very inquisitive indeed. So as soon as he had parted from Jimmy Skunk he made up his mind that he must see the new home of Johnny Chuck. So off he started as fast as he could go towards the old apple tree in a corner of the Green Meadows. Half way there he met Reddy Fox.

"Hello, Peter Rabbit! Where are you going in such a hurry?" asked Reddy Fox.

"Over to the old apple tree to see Johnny Chuck's new home," replied Peter Rabbit as he tried to dodge past Reddy Fox. Then of a sudden he re-

membered and clapped both hands over his mouth.

" Oh, but it's a secret, Reddy Fox. It's a secret, and you mustn't tell! " cried Peter Rabbit.

But Reddy Fox wouldn't promise that he wouldn't tell, for in spite of his handsome coat and fine manners, Reddy Fox is a scamp. And, besides, he has no love for Johnny Chuck, for he has not forgotten how Johnny Chuck once made him run and called him a " 'fraid cat."

So when Reddy Fox left Peter Rabbit he grinned a wicked grin and hurried off to find Bobby Coon. He met him on his way to the Laughing Brook. Reddy Fox told Bobby Coon all about Johnny Chuck's secret and then hurried away after Peter Rabbit, for Reddy Fox also is very inquisitive.

Bobby Coon went on down to the Laughing Brook. There he met Billy

Mink and told him about the new home Johnny Chuck had made under the old apple tree in a corner of the Green Meadows.

Pretty soon Billy Mink met Little Joe Otter and told him.

Then Little Joe Otter met Jerry Muskrat and told him.

Jerry Muskrat saw Blacky the Crow and told him, and Great-Grandfather Frog heard him.

Blacky the Crow met his first cousin, Sammy Jay, and told him.

Sammy Jay met Happy Jack Squirrel and told him.

Happy Jack met his cousin, Striped Chipmunk, and told him.

Striped Chipmunk passed the house of old Mr. Toad and told him.

The next morning, very early, before Old Mother West Wind had come down from the Purple Hills, Johnny Chuck

stole over to his new home to begin work on his new back door. He had hardly begun to dig when he heard some one cough right behind him. He whirled around and there sat Peter Rabbit looking as innocent and surprised as if he had really just discovered the new home for the first time.

"What a splendid new home you have, Johnny Chuck!" said Peter Rabbit.

"Y — e — s," said Johnny Chuck, slowly. "It's a secret," he added suddenly. "You won't tell, will you, Peter Rabbit?"

Peter Rabbit promised that he wouldn't tell. Then Johnny Chuck felt better and went back to work as soon as Peter Rabbit left.

He had hardly begun, however, when some one just above him said: "Good morning, Johnny Chuck."

Johnny Chuck looked up and there in the old apple tree sat Blacky the Crow and his cousin, Sammy Jay.

Just then there was a rustle in the grass and out popped Billy Mink and Little Joe Otter and Jerry Muskrat and Happy Jack Squirrel and Striped Chipmunk and Bobby Coon. When Johnny Chuck had recovered from his surprise and looked over to the doorway of his new home there sat Reddy Fox on Johnny Chuck's precious new mound. It seemed as if all the little meadow people were there, all but Jimmy Skunk, who wisely stayed away.

"We've come to see your new home," said Striped Chipmunk, "and we think it's the nicest home we've seen for a long time."

"It's so nicely hidden away, it's really quite secret," said Reddy Fox, grinning wickedly.

Just then up raced the Merry Little Breezes and one of them had a message for Johnny Chuck from Great-Grandfather Frog. It was this:

"Whisper a secret to a friend and you shout it in the ear of the whole world."

After every one had admired the new home, they said good-bye and scattered over the Green Meadows. Then Johnny Chuck began to dig again, but this time he wasn't making his new back door. No indeed! Johnny Chuck was digging at that new mound of yellow gravel of which he had been so proud. Jolly, round, red Mr. Sun blinked to be sure that he saw aright, for Johnny Chuck was *filling up his new home* between the roots of the old apple tree. When he got through, there wasn't any new home.

Then Johnny Chuck brushed his coat carefully, shook the sand out of his trousers, wiped his hands and started off

for his old home. And this time he didn't take his special hidden path, for Johnny Chuck didn't care who saw him go.

Late that afternoon, Johnny Chuck sat on his old doorstep, with his chin in his hands, watching Old Mother West Wind gathering her Merry Little Breezes into the big bag in which she carries them to their home behind the Purple Hills.

" ' Whisper a secret to a friend and you shout it in the ear of the whole world.' Now what did Grandfather Frog mean by that?" thought Johnny Chuck. " Now I didn't tell anybody but Jimmy Skunk and Jimmy Skunk didn't tell anyone but Peter Rabbit and — and — "

Then Johnny Chuck began to chuckle and finally to laugh. " ' Whisper a secret to a friend and you shout it in the ear of the whole world.' My gracious, what a loud voice I must have had and didn't

know it!" said Johnny Chuck, wiping the tears of laughter from his eyes.

And the next day Johnny Chuck started to make a new home. Where? Oh, that's Johnny Chuck's secret. And no one but jolly, round, red Mr. Sun has found it out yet.

VIII

JOHNNY CHUCK'S GREAT FIGHT

VIII

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JOHNNY CHUCK sat on the door-step of his new home, looking away across the Green Meadows. Johnny Chuck felt very well satisfied with himself and with all the world. He yawned lazily and stretched and stretched and then settled himself comfortably to watch the Merry Little Breezes playing down by the Smiling Pool.

By and by he saw Peter Rabbit go bobbing along down the Lone Little Path. Lipperty, lipperty, lip, went Peter Rabbit and every other jump he looked behind him.

"Now what is Peter Rabbit up to?"

said Johnny Chuck to himself, " and what does he keep looking behind him for? "

Johnny Chuck sat up a little straighter to watch Peter Rabbit hop down the Lone Little Path. Then of a sudden he caught sight of something that made him sit up straighter than ever and open his eyes very wide. Something was following Peter Rabbit. Yes, Sir, something was bobbing along right at Peter Rabbit's heels.

Johnny Chuck forgot the Merry Little Breezes. He forgot how warm it was and how lazy he felt. He forgot everything else in his curiosity to learn what it could be following so closely at Peter Rabbit's heels.

Presently Peter Rabbit stopped and sat up very straight and then — Johnny Chuck nearly tumbled over in sheer surprise! He rubbed his eyes to make sure that he saw aright, for there were *two*

Peter Rabbits! Yes, Sir, there were two Peter Rabbits, only one was very small, very small indeed.

"Oh!" said Johnny Chuck, "that must be Peter Rabbit's baby brother!"

Then he began to chuckle till his fat sides shook. There sat Peter Rabbit with his funny long ears standing straight up, and there right behind him, dressed exactly like him, sat Peter Rabbit's baby brother with *his* funny little long ears standing straight up. When Peter Rabbit wiggled his right ear, his baby brother wiggled *his* right ear. When Peter Rabbit scratched his left ear, his baby brother scratched *his* left ear. Whatever Peter Rabbit did, his baby brother did too.

Presently Peter Rabbit started on down the Lone Little Path — lipperty, lipperty, lip, and right at his heels went his baby brother — lipperty, lipperty, lip. Johnny Chuck watched them out of

sight, and then he settled himself on his doorstep once more to enjoy a sun bath. Every once in a while he chuckled to himself as he remembered how funny Peter Rabbit's baby brother had looked. Presently Johnny Chuck fell asleep.

Jolly, round, red Mr. Sun had climbed quite high in the sky when Johnny Chuck awoke. He yawned and stretched and stretched and yawned, and then he sat up to look over the Green Meadows. Then he became wide awake, very wide awake indeed! Way down on the Green Meadows he caught a glimpse of something red jumping about in the long meadow grass.

"That must be Reddy Fox," thought Johnny Chuck. "Yes, it surely is Reddy Fox. Now I wonder what mischief he is up to."

Then he saw all the Merry Little Breezes racing towards Reddy Fox as

fast as they could go. And there was Sammy Jay screaming at the top of his voice, and his cousin, Blacky the Crow. Happy Jack Squirrel was dancing up and down excitedly on the branch of an old elm close by.

Johnny Chuck waited to see no more, but started down the Lone Little Path to find out what it all was about. Half way down the Lone Little Path he met Peter Rabbit running as hard as he could. His long ears were laid flat back, his big eyes seemed to pop right out of his head, and he was running as Johnny Chuck had never seen him run before.

"What are you running so for, Peter Rabbit?" asked Johnny Chuck.

"To get Bowser the Hound," shouted Peter Rabbit over his shoulder, as he tried to run faster.

"Now what can be the matter?" said Johnny Chuck to himself, "to send Peter

Rabbit after Bowser the Hound?" He knew that, like all the other little meadow people, there was nothing of which Peter Rabbit was so afraid as Farmer Brown's great dog, Bowser the Hound.

Johnny Chuck hurried down the Lone Little Path as fast as his short legs could take his fat, rolly-poly self.

Presently he came out onto the Green Meadows, and there he saw a sight that set every nerve in his round little body a-tingle with rage.

Reddy Fox had found Peter Rabbit's baby brother and was doing his best to frighten him to death.

"I'm going to eat you now," shouted Reddy Fox, and then he sprang on Peter Rabbit's baby brother and gave him a cuff that sent him heels over head sprawling in the grass.

"Coward! Coward, Reddy Fox!" shrieked Sammy Jay.

"Shame! Shame!" shouted the Merry Little Breezes.

"You're nothing but a great big bully!" yelled Blacky the Crow.

But no one did anything to help Peter Rabbit's baby brother, for Reddy Fox is so much bigger than any of the rest of them, except Bobby Coon, that all the little meadow people are afraid of him.

But Reddy Fox just laughed at them, and nipped the long ears of Peter Rabbit's little brother so hard that he cried with the pain.

Now all were so intent watching Reddy Fox torment the baby brother of Peter Rabbit that no one had seen Johnny Chuck coming down the Lone Little Path. And for a few minutes no one recognized the furious little yellow-brown bundle that suddenly knocked Reddy Fox over and seized him by the throat. You see it didn't look a bit like Johnny Chuck.

Every hair was standing on end, he was so mad, and this made him appear twice as big as they had ever seen him before.

"Coward! Coward! Coward!" shrieked Johnny Chuck as he shook Reddy Fox by the throat. And then began the greatest fight that the Green Meadows had ever seen.

Now Johnny Chuck is not naturally a fighter. Oh my, no! He is so good-natured and so sunny-hearted that he seldom quarrels with any one. But when he has to fight, there isn't a cowardly hair on him, not the teeniest, weeniest one. No one ever has a chance to cry, "'Fraid cat! Cry baby!" after Johnny Chuck.

So though, like all the other little meadow people, he was usually just a little afraid of Reddy Fox, because Reddy is so much bigger, he forgot all about it as soon as he caught sight of Reddy Fox tormenting Peter Rabbit's little

brother. He didn't stop to think of what might happen to himself. He didn't stop to think at all. He just gritted his teeth and in a flash had Reddy Fox on his back.

Such a fight was never seen before on the Green Meadows! Reddy Fox is a bully and a coward, for he never fights with any one of his own size if he can help it, but when he has to fight, he fights hard. And he certainly had to fight now.

"Bully!" hissed Johnny Chuck as with his stout little hind feet he ripped the bright red coat of Reddy Fox. "You great big bully!"

Over and over they rolled, Johnny Chuck on top, then Reddy Fox on top, then Johnny Chuck up again, clawing and snarling.

It seemed as if news of the fight had gone over all the Green Meadows, for the little meadow people came running from

every direction — Billy Mink, Little Joe Otter, Jerry Muskrat, Striped Chipmunk, Jimmy Skunk, old Mr. Toad. Even Great-Grandfather Frog, who left his big lily pad, and came hurrying with great jumps across the Green Meadows. They formed a ring around Reddy Fox and Johnny Chuck and danced with excitement. And all wanted Johnny Chuck to win.

Peter Rabbit's poor little brother, so sore and lame from the knocking about from Reddy Fox, and so frightened that he hardly dared breathe, lay flat on the ground under a little bush and was forgotten by all but the Merry Little Breezes, who covered him up with some dead grass, and kissed him and whispered to him not to be afraid now. How Peter Rabbit's little brother did hope that Johnny Chuck would win! His great, big, round, soft eyes were wide with terror as he thought

of what might happen to him if Reddy Fox should whip Johnny Chuck.

But Reddy Fox wasn't whipping Johnny Chuck. Try as he would, he could not get a good hold on that round, fat, little body. And Johnny Chuck's stout claws were ripping his red coat and white vest and Johnny Chuck's sharp teeth were gripping him so that they could not be shaken loose. Pretty soon Reddy Fox began to think of nothing but getting away. Every one was shouting for Johnny Chuck. Every time Reddy Fox was underneath, he would hear a great shout from all the little meadow people, and he knew that they were glad.

Now Johnny Chuck was round and fat and rolly-poly, and when one is round and fat and rolly-poly, one's breath is apt to be short. So it was with Johnny Chuck. He had fought so hard that his breath was nearly gone. Finally he

loosed his hold on Reddy Fox for just a second to draw in a good breath. Reddy Fox saw his chance, and, with a quick pull and spring, he broke away.

How all the little meadow people did scatter! You see they were very brave, very brave indeed, so long as Johnny Chuck had Reddy Fox down, but now that Reddy Fox was free, each one was suddenly afraid and thought only of himself. Jimmy Skunk knocked Jerry Muskrat flat in his hurry to get away. Billy Mink trod on Great-Grandfather Frog's big feet and didn't even say "Excuse me." Striped Chipmunk ran head first into a big thistle and squealed as much from fear as pain.

But Reddy Fox paid no attention to any of them. He just wanted to get away, and off he started, limping as fast as he could go up the Lone Little Path. Such a looking sight! His beautiful

red coat was in tatters. His face was scratched. He hobbled as he ran. And just as he broke away, Johnny Chuck made a grab and pulled a great mouthful of hair out of the splendid tail Reddy Fox was so proud of.

When the little meadow people saw that Reddy Fox was actually running away, they stopped running themselves, and all began to shout: "Reddy Fox is a coward and a bully! Coward! Coward!" Then they crowded around Johnny Chuck and all began talking at once about his great fight.

Just then they heard a great noise up on the hill. They saw Reddy Fox coming back down the Lone Little Path, and he was using his legs just as well as he knew how. Right behind him, his great mouth open and waking all the echoes with his big voice, was Bowser the Hound.

You see, although Peter Rabbit couldn't

fight for his little baby brother and is usually very, very timid, he isn't altogether a coward. Indeed, he had been very brave, very brave indeed. He had gone up to Farmer Brown's and had jumped right under the nose of Bowser the Hound. Now that is something that Bowser the Hound never can stand. So off he had started after Peter Rabbit. And Peter Rabbit had started back for the Green Meadows as fast as his long legs could take him, for he knew that if once Bowser the Hound caught sight of Reddy Fox, he would forget all about such a little thing as a saucy rabbit.

Sure enough, half way down the Lone Little Path they met Reddy Fox sneaking off home, and, when Bowser the Hound saw him, he straightway forgot all about Peter Rabbit, and, with a great roar, started after Reddy Fox.

When Johnny Chuck had carefully

brushed his coat and all the little meadow people had wished him good luck, he started off up the Lone Little Path for home, the Merry Little Breezes dancing ahead and Peter Rabbit coming lipperty, lipperty, lip behind, and right between them hopped Peter Rabbit's little brother, who thought Johnny Chuck the greatest hero in the world.

When they reached Johnny Chuck's old home, Peter Rabbit and Peter Rabbit's little brother tried to tell him how thankful they were to him, but Johnny Chuck just laughed and said: "It was nothing at all, just nothing at all."

When at last all had gone, even the Merry Little Breezes, Johnny Chuck slipped away to his new home, which is his secret, you know, which no one knows but jolly, round, red Mr. Sun, who won't tell.

"I hope," said Johnny Chuck, as he

stretched himself out on the mound of warm sand by his doorway, for he was very tired, "I hope," said Johnny Chuck, sighing contentedly, "that Reddy Fox got away from Bowser the Hound!"

And Reddy Fox did.

IX

MR. TOAD'S OLD SUIT

IX

MR. TOAD'S OLD SUIT

PETER RABBIT was tired and very sleepy as he hopped along the Crooked Little Path down the hill. He could see Old Mother West Wind just emptying her Merry Little Breezes out of her big bag onto the Green Meadows to play all the bright summer day. Peter Rabbit yawned and yawned again as he watched them dance over to the Smiling Pool. Then he hopped on down the Crooked Little Path towards home.

Sammy Jay, sitting on a fence post, saw him coming.

"Peter Rabbit out all night!
Oh my goodness what a sight!

Peter Rabbit, reprobate!
No good end will be your fate!"

shouted Sammy Jay.

Peter Rabbit ran out his tongue at Sammy Jay.

"Who stole Happy Jack's nuts? Thief! Thief! Thief!" shouted Peter Rabbit at Sammy Jay, and kept on down the Crooked Little Path.

It was true — Peter Rabbit had been out all night playing in the moonlight, stealing a midnight feast in Farmer Brown's cabbage patch and getting into mischief with Bobby Coon. Now when most of the little meadow people were just waking up Peter Rabbit was thinking of bed.

Presently he came to a big piece of bark which is the roof of Mr. Toad's house. Mr. Toad was sitting in his doorway blinking at jolly, round, red Mr. Sun, who had just begun to climb up the sky.

"Good morning, Mr. Toad," said Peter Rabbit.

"Good morning," said Mr. Toad.

"You're looking very fine this morning, Mr. Toad," said Peter Rabbit.

"I'm feeling very fine this morning," said Mr. Toad.

"Why, my gracious, you have on a new suit, Mr. Toad!" exclaimed Peter Rabbit.

"Well, what if I have, Peter Rabbit?" demanded Mr. Toad.

"Oh, nothing, nothing, nothing at all, Mr. Toad, nothing at all," said Peter Rabbit hastily, "only I didn't know you ever had a new suit. What have you done with your old suit, Mr. Toad?"

"Swallowed it," said Mr. Toad shortly, turning his back on Peter Rabbit.

And that was all Peter Rabbit could get out of Mr. Toad, so he started on down the Crooked Little Path. Now

Peter Rabbit has a great deal of curiosity and is forever poking into other people's affairs. The more he thought about it the more he wondered what Mr. Toad could have done with his old suit. Of course he hadn't *swallowed* it! Who ever heard of such a thing! The more he thought of it the more Peter Rabbit felt that he must know what Mr. Toad had done with his old suit. By this time he had forgotten that he had been out all night. He had forgotten that he was sleepy. He had got to find out about Mr. Toad's old suit.

"I'll just run over to the Smiling Pool and ask Grandfather Frog. He'll surely know what Mr. Toad does with his old suits," said Peter Rabbit, and began to hop faster.

When he reached the Smiling Pool there sat Great-Grandfather Frog on his big green lily pad as usual. There was

a hungry look in his big goggly eyes, for it was so early that no foolish, green flies had come his way yet. But Peter Rabbit was too full of curiosity in Mr. Toad's affairs to notice this.

"Good morning, Grandfather Frog," said Peter Rabbit.

"Good morning," replied Grandfather Frog a wee bit gruffly.

"You're looking very fine this morning, Grandfather Frog," said Peter Rabbit.

"Not so fine as I'd feel if I had a few fat, foolish, green flies," said Grandfather Frog.

"I've just met your cousin, Mr. Toad, and he has on a new suit," said Peter Rabbit.

"Indeed!" replied Grandfather Frog. "Well, I think it's high time."

"What does Mr. Toad do with his old suit, Grandfather Frog?" asked Peter Rabbit.

"Chug-a-rum! It's none of my business. Maybe he swallows it," replied Grandfather Frog crossly, and turned his back on Peter Rabbit.

Peter Rabbit saw that his curiosity must remain unsatisfied. He suddenly remembered that he had been out all night and was very, very sleepy, so he started off home across the Green Meadows.

Now the Merry Little Breezes had heard all that Peter Rabbit and Grandfather Frog had said, and they made up their minds that they would find out from Grandfather Frog what Mr. Toad really did do with his old suit. First of all they scattered over the Green Meadows. Presently back they all came, each blowing ahead of him a fat, foolish, green fly. Right over to the big green lily pad they blew the green flies.

"Chug-a-rum! Chug-a-rum! Chug-

a-rum!" said Grandfather Frog, as each fat, foolish, green fly disappeared inside his white and yellow waistcoat. When the last one was out of sight, all but a leg which was left sticking out of a corner of Grandfather Frog's big mouth, one of the Merry Little Breezes ventured to ask him what became of Mr. Toad's old suit.

Grandfather Frog settled himself comfortably on the big green lily pad and folded his hands across his white and yellow waistcoat.

"Chug-a-rum," began Grandfather Frog. "Once upon a time —"

The Merry Little Breezes clapped their hands and settled themselves among the buttercups and daisies, for they knew that soon they would know what Mr. Toad did with his old suit.

"Once upon a time," began Grandfather Frog again, "when the world was young, old King Bear received word that

old Mother Nature would visit the Green Meadows and the Green Forest. Of course old King Bear wanted his kingdom and his subjects to look their very best, so he issued a royal order that every one of the little meadow people and every one of the little forest folk should wear a new suit on the day that old Mother Nature was to pay her visit.

"Now like old King Bear, every one wanted to appear his very best before old Mother Nature, but as no one knew the exact day she was to come, every one began at once to wear his best suit, and to take the greatest care of it. Old King Bear appeared every day in a suit of glossy black. Lightfoot the Deer, threw away his dingy gray suit, and put on a coat of beautiful red and fawn. Mr. Mink, Mr. Otter, Mr. Muskrat, Mr. Rabbit, Mr. Woodchuck, Mr. Coon, who you know was first cousin to old King

Bear, Mr. Gray Squirrel, Mr. Fox Squirrel, Mr. Red Squirrel, all put on brand new suits. Mr. Skunk changed his black and white stripes for a suit of all black, very handsome, very handsome indeed. Mr. Chipmunk took care to see that his new suit had the most beautiful stripes to be obtained.

"Mr. Jay, who was something of a dandy, had a wonderful new coat that looked for all the world as it if had been cut from the bluest patch of sky and trimmed with edging taken from the whitest clouds. Even Mr. Crow and Mr. Owl took pains to look their very best.

"But Mr. Toad couldn't see the need of such a fuss. He thought his neighbors spent altogether too much time and thought on dress. To be sure he was anxious to look his best when old Mother Nature came, so he got a new suit all

ready. But Mr. Toad couldn't afford to sit around in idleness admiring his new clothes. No indeed! Mr. Toad had too much to do. He was altogether too busy. He had a large garden to take care of, had Mr. Toad, and work in a garden is very hard on clothes. So Mr. Toad just wore his old suit over his new one and went on about his business.

"By and by the great day came when old Mother Nature arrived to inspect the kingdom of old King Bear. All the little meadow people and all the little forest folk hastened to pay their respects to old Mother Nature and to strut about in their fine clothes — all but Mr. Toad. He was so busy that he didn't even know that old Mother Nature had arrived.

"Late in the afternoon, Mr. Toad stopped to rest. He had just cleared his cabbage patch of the slugs which threatened to eat up his crop and he was very

tired. Presently he happened to look up the road, and who should he see but old Mother Nature herself coming to visit his garden and to find out why Mr. Toad had not been to pay her his respects.

"Suddenly Mr. Toad remembered that he had on his working clothes, which were very old, very dirty and very ragged. For just a minute he didn't know what to do. Then he dived under a cabbage leaf and began to pull off his old suit. But the old suit stuck! He was in such a hurry and so excited that he couldn't find the buttons. Finally he got his trousers off. Then he reached over and got hold of the back of his coat and tugged and hauled until finally he pulled his old coat off right over his head just as if it were a shirt.

"Mr. Toad gave a great sigh of relief as he stepped out in his new suit, for you remember that he had been wearing that

new suit underneath the old one all the time.

"Mr. Toad was very well pleased with himself until he thought how terribly untidy that ragged old suit looked lying on the ground. What should he do with it? He couldn't hide it in the garden, for old Mother Nature's eyes are so sharp that she would be sure to see it. What should he do?

"Then Mr. Toad had a happy thought. Every one made fun of his big mouth. But what was a big mouth for if not to use? He would swallow his old suit! In a flash Mr. Toad dived under the cabbage leaf and crammed his old suit into his mouth.

"When old Mother Nature came into the garden, Mr. Toad was waiting in the path to receive her. Very fine he looked in his new suit and you would have thought he had been waiting all day to

receive old Mother Nature, but for one thing — swallow as much and as hard as he would, he couldn't get down quite all of his old suit, and a leg of his trousers hung out of a corner of his big mouth.

"Of course old Mother Nature saw it right away. And how she did laugh! And of course Mr. Toad felt very much mortified. But Mother Nature was so pleased with Mr. Toad's garden and with Mr. Toad's industry that she quite overlooked the ragged trousers leg hanging from the corner of Mr. Toad's mouth.

"'Fine clothes are not to be compared with fine work,' said old Mother Nature. 'I herewith appoint you my chief gardener, Mr. Toad. And as a sign that all may know that this is so, hereafter you shall always swallow your old suit whenever you change your clothes!'

"And from that day to this the toads have been the very best of gardeners.

And in memory of their great, great, great-grandfather a thousand times removed they have always swallowed their old suits.

"Now you know what my cousin, old Mr. Toad, did with his old suit just before Peter Rabbit passed his house this morning," concluded Great-Grandfather Frog.

"Oh," cried the Merry Little Breezes, "thank you, thank you, Grandfather Frog!"

Then they raced away across the Green Meadows and up the Crooked Little Path to see if old Mr. Toad was gardening. And Peter Rabbit still wonders what old Mr. Toad did with his old suit.

X

GRANDFATHER FROG GETS EVEN

X

GRANDFATHER FROG GETS EVEN

OLD Grandfather Frog sat on his big green lily pad in the Smiling Pool dreaming of the days when the world was young and the frogs ruled the world. His hands were folded across his white and yellow waistcoat. Round, red, smiling Mr. Sun sent down his warmest rays on the back of Grandfather Frog's green coat.

Very early that morning Old Mother West Wind, hurrying down from the Purple Hills on her way to help the white-sailed ships across the great ocean, had stopped long enough to blow three or four fat, foolish, green flies over to the big lily pad, and they were now safely inside

the white and yellow waistcoat. A thousand little tadpoles, the great, great-grandchildren of Grandfather Frog, were playing in the Smiling Pool, and every once in a while wriggling up to the big lily pad to look with awe at Grandfather Frog and wonder if they would ever be as handsome and big and wise as he.

And still old Grandfather Frog sat dreaming and dreaming of the days when all the frogs had tails and ruled the world.

Presently Billy Mink came hopping and skipping down the Laughing Brook. Sometimes he swam a little way and sometimes he ran a little way along the bank, and sometimes he jumped from stone to stone. Billy Mink was feeling very good — very good indeed. He had caught a fine fat trout for breakfast. He had hidden two more away for dinner in a snug little hole no one knew of but

himself. Now he had nothing to do but get into mischief. You can always depend upon Billy Mink to get into mischief. He just can't help it.

So Billy Mink came hopping and skipping down the Laughing Brook to the Smiling Pool. Then he stopped, as still as the rock he was standing on, and peeped through the bulrushes. Billy Mink is very cautious, very cautious indeed. He always looks well before he shows himself, that nothing may surprise him.

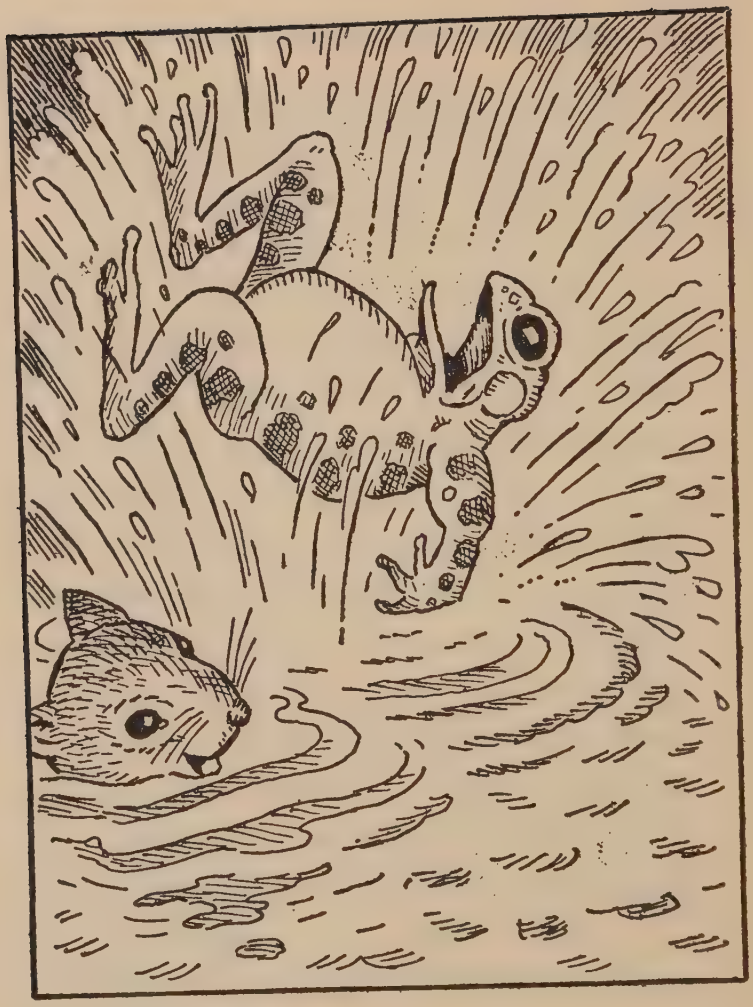
So Billy Mink looked all over the Smiling Pool and the grassy banks. He saw the sunbeams dancing on the water. He saw the tadpoles having such a good time in the Smiling Pool. He saw the Merry Little Breezes kissing the buttercups and daisies on the bank, and he saw old Grandfather Frog with his hands folded across his white and yellow waistcoat sit-

ting on the green lily pad, dreaming of the days when the world was young.

Then Billy Mink took a long breath, a very long breath, and dived into the Smiling Pool. Now, Billy Mink can swim very fast, very fast indeed. For a little way he can swim even faster than Mr. Trout. And he can stay under water a long time.

Straight across the Smiling Pool, with not even the tip of his nose out of water, swam Billy Mink. The thousand little tadpoles saw him coming and fled in all directions to bury themselves in the mud at the bottom of the Smiling Pool, for when he thinks no one is looking Billy Mink sometimes gobbles up a fat tadpole for breakfast.

Straight across the Smiling Pool swam Billy Mink toward the big green lily pad where Grandfather Frog sat dreaming of the days when the world was young.



He was so surprised he forgot to close it.

When he was right under the big green lily pad he suddenly kicked up hard with his hind feet. Up went the big green lily pad, and, of course, up went Grandfather Frog — up and over flat on his back, with a great splash into the Smiling Pool!

Now, Grandfather Frog's mouth is very big. Indeed, no one else has so big a mouth, unless it be his cousin, old Mr. Toad. And when Grandfather Frog went over flat on his back, splash in the Smiling Pool, his mouth was wide open.

You see he was so surprised he forgot to close it. So, of course, Grandfather Frog swallowed a great deal of water, and he choked and spluttered and swam around in foolish little circles trying to find himself. Finally he climbed out on his big green lily pad.

"Chug-a-rum!" said Grandfather Frog, and looked this way and looked

that way. Then he gave a funny hop and turned about in the opposite direction and looked this way and looked that way, but all he saw was the Smiling Pool dimpling and smiling, Mrs. Redwing bringing a fat worm to her hungry little babies in their snug nest in the bulrushes, and the Merry Little Breezes hurrying over to see what the trouble might be.

"Chug-a-rum!" said Grandfather Frog. "It is very strange. I must have fallen asleep and had a bad dream."

Then he once more settled himself comfortably on the big green lily pad, folded his hands across his white and yellow waistcoat, and seemed to be dreaming again, only his big goggly eyes were not dreaming. No, indeed! They were very much awake, and they saw all that was going on in the Smiling Pool. Great-Grandfather Frog was just pretending. You may fool him once, but Grand-

father Frog has lived so long that he has become very wise, and though Billy Mink is very smart, it takes some one a great deal smarter than Billy Mink to fool Grandfather Frog twice in the same way.

Billy Mink, hiding behind the Big Rock, had laughed and laughed till he had to hold his sides when Grandfather Frog had choked and spluttered and hopped about on the big lily pad trying to find out what it all meant. He thought it such a good joke that he couldn't keep it to himself, so when he saw Little Joe Otter coming to try his slippery slide he swam across to tell him all about it. Little Joe Otter laughed and laughed until he had to hold *his* sides. Then they both swam back to hide behind the Big Rock to watch until Grandfather Frog should forget all about it, and they could play the trick over again.

Now, out of the corner of one of his big goggly eyes, Grandfather Frog had seen Billy Mink and Little Joe Otter with their heads close together, laughing and holding their sides, and he saw them swim over behind the Big Rock. Pretty soon one of the Merry Little Breezes danced over to see if Grandfather Frog had really gone to sleep. Grandfather Frog didn't move, not the teeniest, weeniest bit, but he whispered something to the Merry Little Breeze, and the Merry Little Breeze flew away, shaking with laughter, to where the other Merry Little Breezes were playing with the buttercups and daisies.

Then all the Merry Little Breezes clapped their hands and laughed too. They left the buttercups and daisies and began to play tag across the Smiling Pool.

Now, right on the edge of the Big Rock lay a big stick. Pretty soon the Merry

Little Breezes danced over to the Big Rock, and then, suddenly, all together they gave the big stick a push. Off it went, and then such a splashing and squealing as there was behind the Big Rock!

In a few moments Little Joe Otter crept out beside his slippery slide and slipped away holding on to his head. And, sneaking through the bulrushes, so as not to be seen, crawled Billy Mink, back towards his home on the Laughing Brook. Billy Mink wasn't laughing now. Oh, no! He was limping and he was holding on to his head. Little Joe Otter and Billy Mink had been sitting right underneath the big stick.

"Chug-a-rum!" said Grandfather Frog and held on to his sides and opened his mouth very wide in a noiseless laugh, for Grandfather Frog never makes a sound when he laughs.

"Chug-a-rum!" said Grandfather Frog once more. Then he folded his hands across his white and yellow waistcoat and began again to dream of the days when the frogs had long tails and ruled the world.

XI

THE DISAPPOINTED BUSH

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THE DISAPPOINTED BUSH

WAY down beside the Laughing Brook grew a little bush. It looked a whole lot like other little bushes all around it. But really it was quite different, as you shall see. When in the spring warm, jolly, round Mr. Sun brought back the birds and set them singing, when the little flowers popped their heads out of the ground to have a look around, then all the little bushes put out their green leaves.

This little bush of which I am telling you put out its green leaves with the rest. The little leaves grew bigger and bigger on all the little bushes. By and by on some of the other little bushes, little

brown buds began to appear and grow and grow. Then on more and more of the little bushes the little brown buds came and grew and grew. But on this little bush of which I am telling you no little brown buds appeared. The little bush felt very sad indeed.

Pretty soon all the little brown buds on the other little brown bushes burst their brown coats, and then all the little bushes were covered with little flowers. Some were white and some were yellow and some were pink; and the air was filled with the sweet odor of all the little flowers. It brought the bees from far, far away to gather the honey, and all the little bushes were very happy indeed.

But the little bush of which I am telling you had no little flowers, for you see it had had no little buds, and it felt lonely and shut away from the other little bushes, and very sad indeed. But

it bravely kept on growing and growing and growing. Its little leaves grew bigger and bigger and bigger, and it tried its best not to mind because it had no little flowers.

Then one by one, and two by two, and three by three, and finally in whole showers, the little flowers of all the other little bushes fell off, and they looked very much like the little bush of which I am telling you, so that the little bush no longer felt sad.

All summer long all the little bushes grew and grew and grew. The birds came and built their nests among them. Peter Rabbit and his brothers and sisters scampered under them. The butterflies flew over them.

By and by came the fall, and with the fall came Jack Frost. He went about among the little bushes, pinching the leaves. Then the little green leaves

turned to brown and red and yellow and pretty soon they fluttered down to the ground, the Merry Little Breezes blew them about and all the little bushes were bare. They had no leaves at all to cover their little naked brown limbs.

The little bush of which I am telling you lost its leaves with the rest. But all the summer long this little bush had been growing some of those little brown buds, which the other bushes had had in the spring, and now, when all the other little bushes had lost all the green leaves, and had nothing at all upon their little brown twigs, behold! one beautiful day, the little bush of which I am telling you was covered with gold, for each little brown bud had burst its little brown coat and there was a beautiful little yellow flower. Such a multitude of these little yellow flowers! They covered the little bush from top to bottom. Then the little

bush felt very happy indeed, for it was the only bush which had any flowers. And every one who passed that way stopped to look at it and to praise it.

Colder grew the weather and colder. Johnny Chuck tucked himself away to sleep all winter. Grandfather Frog went deep, deep down in the mud, not to come out again until spring. By and by the little yellow flowers dropped off the little bush, just as the other little flowers in spring had dropped off the other bushes. But they left behind them tiny little packages, one for every little flower that had been on the bush. All winter long these little packages clung to the little bush. In the spring when the little leaves burst forth in all the little bushes, these little packages on the little bush of which I am telling you grew and grew and grew. While the other little bushes had a lot of little flowers as they had had the

year before, these little brown packages on the little bush of which I am telling you kept on growing. And they comforted the little bush because it felt that it really had something worth while.

All the summer long the little brown packages grew and grew until they looked like little nuts. When the fall came again and all the little leaves dropped off all the little bushes, and the little bush of which I am telling you was covered with another lot of little yellow flowers and was very happy, then these little brown nuts, one bright autumn day, suddenly popped open! And out of each one flew two brown shiny little seeds. You never saw such a popping and a snapping and a jumping! Pop! pop! snap! snap! hippetty hop! they went, faster than the corn pops in the corn popper. Reddy Fox, who always is suspicious, thought some one was shooting at him. Down

on the ground fell the little brown shining seeds and tucked themselves into the warm earth under the warm leaves, there to stay all winter long.

And when the third spring came with all its little birds and all its little flowers and the warm sunshine, every one of these little brown seeds which had tucked themselves into the warm earth, burst its little brown skin, and up into the sunshine came a little green plant, which would grow and grow and grow, and by and by become just like the little bush I am telling you about.

When the little bush looked down and saw all these little green children popping out of the ground, it was very happy indeed, for it knew that it would no longer be lonely. It no longer felt bad when all the other bushes were covered with flowers, for it knew that by and by when all the other little bushes had lost

all their leaves and all their flowers, then would come its turn, and it knew that for a whole year its little brown children would be held safe on its branches.

Now, what do you think is the name of this little bush? Why, it is the witch hazel. And sometime when you fall down and bump yourself hard grandma will go to the medicine closet and will bring out a bottle, and from that bottle she will pour something on that little sore place and it will make it feel better. Do you know what it is? It is the gift of the witch hazel bush to little boys and big men to make them feel better when they are hurt.

XII

WHY BOBBY COON WASHES HIS FOOD

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HAPPY-GO-LUCKY Bobby Coon sat on the edge of the Laughing Brook just as round, red Mr. Sun popped up from behind the Purple Hills and Old Mother West Wind turned all her Merry Little Breezes out to romp on the Green Meadows.

Bobby Coon had been out all night. You see Bobby Coon is very apt to get into mischief, and because usually it is safer to get into mischief under cover of the darkness Bobby Coon prefers the night wherein to go abroad. Not that Bobby Coon is really bad! Oh my, no! Everybody likes Bobby Coon. But he

can no more keep out of mischief than a duck can keep out of water.

So Bobby Coon sat on the edge of the Laughing Brook and he was very busy, very busy indeed. He was washing his breakfast. Really, it was his dinner, for turning night into day just turns everything topsy-turvy. So Bobby Coon eats dinner when most of the little meadow people are eating breakfast.

This morning he was very busy washing a luscious ear of sweet corn just in the milk. He dipped it in the water and with one little black paw rubbed it thoroughly. Then he looked it over carefully before, with a sigh of contentment, he sat down to put it in his empty little stomach. When he had finished it to the last sweet, juicy kernel, he ambled sleepily up the Lone Little Path to the big hollow chestnut tree where he lives, and in its great hollow in a soft bed of leaves Bobby Coon

curled himself up in a tight little ball to sleep the long, bright day away.

One of the Merry Little Breezes softly followed him. When he had crawled into the hollow chestnut and only his funny, ringed tail hung out, the Merry Little Breezes tweaked it sharply just for fun, and then danced away down the Lone Little Path to join the other Merry Little Breezes around the Smiling Pool.

"Oh! Grandfather Frog," cried a Merry Little Breeze, "tell us why it is that Bobby Coon always washes his food. He never eats it where he gets it or takes it home to his hollow in the big chestnut, but always comes to the Laughing Brook to wash it. None of the other meadow people do that."

Now Great-Grandfather Frog is counted very wise. He is very, very old and he knows the history of all the tribes of

little meadow people way back to the time when the frogs ruled the world.

When the Merry Little Breeze asked him why Bobby Coon always washes his food, Grandfather Frog stopped to snap up a particularly fat, foolish, green fly that came his way. Then, while all the Merry Little Breezes gathered around him, he settled himself on his big green lily pad and began:

"Once upon a time, when the world was young, old King Bear ruled in the Green Forest. Of course old Mother Nature, who was even more beautiful then than she is now, was the real ruler, but she let old King Bear think he ruled so long as he ruled wisely.

"All the little Green Forest folk and all the little people of the Green Meadows used to take presents of food to old King Bear, so that he never had to hunt for things to eat. He grew fatter and

fatter and fatter until it seemed as if his skin must burst. And the fatter he grew the lazier he grew."

Grandfather Frog paused with an expectant far-away look in his great bulging eyes. Then he leaped into the air so far that when he came down it was with a great splash in the Smiling Pool. But as he swam back to his big lily pad the leg of a foolish green fly could be seen sticking out of one corner of his big mouth, and he settled himself with a sigh of great contentment.

"Old King Bear," continued Grandfather Frog, just as if there had been no interruption, "grew fatter and lazier every day, and like a great many other fat and lazy people who have nothing to do for themselves but are always waited on by others, he grew shorter and shorter in temper and harder and harder to please.

"Now perhaps you don't know it, but the Bear family and the Coon family are very closely related. In fact, they are second cousins. Old Mr. Coon, Bobby Coon's father with a thousand greats tacked on before, was young then, and he was very, very proud of being related to old King Bear. He began to pass some of his old playfellows on the Green Meadows without seeing them. He spent a great deal of time brushing his coat and combing his whiskers and caring for his big ringed tail. He held his head very high and he put on such airs that pretty soon he could see no one at all but members of his own family and of the royal family of Bear.

"Now as old King Bear grew fat and lazy he grew fussy, so that he was no longer content to take everything brought him, but picked out the choicest portions for himself and left the rest. Mr. Coon

took charge of all the things brought as tribute to old King Bear and of course where there were so many goodies left he got all he wanted without working.

"So just as old King Bear had grown fat and lazy and selfish, Mr. Coon grew fat and lazy and selfish. Pretty soon he began to pick out the best things for himself and hide them before old King Bear saw them. When old King Bear was asleep he would go get them and stuff himself like a greedy pig. And because he was stealing and wanted no one to see him he always ate his stolen feasts at night.

"Now old Mother Nature is, as you all know, very, very wise, oh very wise indeed. One of the first laws she made when the world was young is that every living thing shall work for what it has, and the harder it works the stronger it shall grow. So when Old Mother Nature

saw how fat and lazy and selfish old King Bear was getting and how fat and lazy and dishonest his cousin, Mr. Coon, was becoming, she determined that they should be taught a lesson which they would remember for ever and ever and ever.

"First she proclaimed that old King Bear should be king no longer, and no more need the little folks of the Green Forest and the little people of the Green Meadows bring him tribute.

"Now when old Mother Nature made this proclamation old King Bear was fast asleep. It was just on the edge of winter and he had picked out a nice warm cave with a great pile of leaves for a bed. Old Mother Nature peeped in at him. He was snoring and probably dreaming of more good things to eat. 'If he is to be king no longer, there is no use in waking him now,' said old Mother

Nature to herself, 'he is so fat and so stupid. He shall sleep until gentle Sister South Wind comes in the spring to kiss away the snow and ice. Then he shall waken with a lean stomach and a great appetite and there shall be none to feed him.'

"Now old Mother Nature always has a warm heart and she was very fond of Bobby Coon's grandfather a thousand times removed. So when she saw what a selfish glutton and thief he had become she decided to put him to sleep just as she had old King Bear. But first she would teach Mr. Coon that stolen food is not the sweetest.

"So old Mother Nature found some tender, juicy corn just in the milk which Mr. Coon had stolen from old King Bear. Then she went down on the Green Meadows where the wild mustard grows and gathering a lot of this she rubbed the

juice into the corn and then put it back where Mr. Coon had left it.

"Now I have told you that it was night when Mr. Coon had his stolen feasts, for he wanted no one to see him. So no one was there when he took a great bite of the tender, juicy corn old Mother Nature had put back for him. Being greedy and a glutton, he swallowed the first mouthful before he had fairly tasted it, and took a second, and then such a time as there was on the edge of the Green Forest! Mr. Coon rolled over and over with both of his forepaws clasped over his stomach and groaned and groaned and groaned. He had rubbed his eyes and of course had got mustard into them and could not see. He waked up all the little Green Forest folk who sleep through the night, as good people should, and they all gathered around to see what was the matter with Mr. Coon.

"Finally old Mother Nature came to his relief and brought him some water. Then she led him to his home in the great hollow in the big chestnut tree, and when she had seen him curled up in a tight little ball among the dried leaves she put him into the long sleep as she had old King Bear.

"In the spring, when gentle Sister South Wind kissed away all the snow and ice, old King Bear, who was king no longer, and Mr. Coon awoke and both were very thin, and both were very hungry, oh very, very hungry indeed. Old King Bear, who was king no longer, wasn't the least mite fussy about what he had to eat, but ate gladly any food he could find.

"But Mr. Coon remembered the burning of his stomach and mouth and could not forget it. So whenever he found anything to eat he first took it to the

Laughing Brook or the Smiling Pool and washed it very carefully, lest there be some mustard on it.

"And ever since that long ago time, when the world was young, the Coon family has remembered that experience of Mr. Coon, who was second cousin to old King Bear, and that is why Bobby Coon washes his food, travels about at night, and sleeps all winter," concluded Grandfather Frog, fixing his great goggle eyes on a foolish green fly headed his way.

"Oh thank you, thank you, Grandfather Frog," cried the Merry Little Breezes as they danced away over the Green Meadows. But one of them slipped back long enough to get behind the foolish green fly and blow him right up to Grandfather Frog's big lily pad.

"Chug-a-rum," said Grandfather Frog, smacking his lips.

XIII

THE MERRY LITTLE BREEZES HAVE A BUSY DAY

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THE MERRY LITTLE BREEZES HAVE A BUSY DAY

OLD MOTHER WEST WIND came down from the Purple Hills in the shadowy coolness of the early morning, before even jolly, round, red Mr. Sun had thrown off his rosy coverlids for his daily climb up through the blue sky. The last little star was blinking sleepily as Old Mother West Wind turned her big bag upside down on the Green Meadows and all her children, the Merry Little Breezes, tumbled out on the soft green grass.

Then Old Mother West Wind kissed them all around and hurried away to hunt

for a rain cloud which had gone astray. The Merry Little Breezes watched her go. Then they played hide and seek until jolly, round, red Mr. Sun had climbed out of bed and was smiling down on the Green Meadows.

Pretty soon along came Peter Rabbit, lipperty-lipperty-lip.

"Hello, Peter Rabbit!" shouted the Merry Little Breezes. "Come play with us!"

"Can't," said Peter Rabbit. "I have to go find some tender young carrots for my breakfast," and away he hurried, lipperty-lipperty-lip.

In a few minutes Jimmy Skunk came in sight and he seemed to be almost hurrying along the Crooked Little Path down the hill. The Merry Little Breezes danced over to meet him.

"Hello, Jimmy Skunk!" they cried. "Come play with us!"

Jimmy Skunk shook his head. "Can't," said he. "I have to go look for some beetles for my breakfast," and off he went looking under every old stick and pulling over every stone not too big for his strength.

The Merry Little Breezes watched him for a few minutes and then raced over to the Laughing Brook. There they found Billy Mink stealing softly down towards the Smiling Pool.

"Oh, Billy Mink, come play with us," begged the Merry Little Breezes. "Can't," said Billy Mink. "I have to catch a trout for Grandfather Mink's breakfast," and he crept on towards the Smiling Pool.

Just then along came Bumble the Bee. Now Bumble the Bee is a lazy fellow who always makes a great fuss, as if he was the busiest and most important fellow in the world.

"Good morning, Bumble," cried the Merry Little Breezes. "Come play with us!"

"Buzz, buzz, buzz," grumbled Bumble the Bee. "Can't, for I have to get a sack of honey," and off he hurried to the nearest dandelion.

Then the Merry Little Breezes hunted up Johnny Chuck. But Johnny Chuck was busy, too busy to play. Bobby Coon was asleep, for he had been out all night. Reddy Fox also was asleep. Striped Chipmunk was in such a hurry to fill the pockets in his cheeks that he could hardly stop to say good morning. Happy Jack Squirrel just flirted his big tail and rushed away as if he had many important things to attend to.

Finally the Merry Little Breezes gave it up and sat down among the buttercups and daisies to talk it over. Every one seemed to have something to do, every

one but themselves. It was such a busy world that sunshiny morning! Pretty soon one of the Merry Little Breezes hopped up very suddenly and began the maddest little dance among the buttercups.

"As we haven't anything to do for ourselves let's do something for somebody else!" he shouted.

Up jumped all the Little Breezes, clapping their hands.

"Oh let's!" they shouted.

Way over across the Green Meadows they could see two long ears above the nodding daisies.

"There's Peter Rabbit," cried one. "Let's help him find those tender young carrots!"

No sooner proposed than off they all raced to see who could reach Peter first. Peter was sitting up very straight, looking this way and looking that way for some

tender young carrots, but not one had he found, and his stomach was empty. The Merry Little Breezes stopped just long enough to tickle his long ears and pull his whiskers, then away they raced, scattering in all directions, to see who could first find a tender young carrot for Peter Rabbit. By and by when one of them did find a field of tender young carrots he rushed off, taking the smell of them with him to tickle the nose of Peter Rabbit.

Peter wriggled his nose, his funny little nose, very fast when it was tickled with the smell of tender young carrots, and the Merry Little Breeze laughed to see him.

"Come on, Peter Rabbit, for this is my busy day!" he cried.

Peter Rabbit didn't have to be invited twice. Away he went, lipperty-lipperty-lip, as fast as his long legs could take him after the Merry Little Breeze. And

presently they came to the field of tender young carrots.

"Oh thank you, Merry Little Breeze!" cried Peter Rabbit, and straightway began to eat his breakfast.

Another Merry Little Breeze, slipping up the Crooked Little Path on the hill, spied the hind legs of a fat beetle sticking out from under a flat stone. At once the Little Breeze remembered Jimmy Skunk, who was hunting for beetles for his breakfast. Off rushed the Little Breeze in merry whirls that made the grasses sway and bend and the daisies nod.

When after a long, long hunt he found Jimmy Skunk, Jimmy was very much out of sorts. In fact Jimmy Skunk was positively cross. You see, he hadn't had any breakfast, for hunt as he would he couldn't find a single beetle.

When the Merry Little Breeze danced up behind Jimmy Skunk and, just in fun,

rumpled up his black and white coat, Jimmy quite lost his temper. In fact he said some things not at all nice to the Merry Little Breeze. But the Merry Little Breeze just laughed. The more he laughed the crosser Jimmy Skunk grew, and the crosser Jimmy Skunk grew the more the Merry Little Breeze laughed. It was such a jolly laugh that pretty soon Jimmy Skunk began to grin a little sheepishly, then to really smile and finally to laugh outright in spite of his empty stomach. You see it is very hard, very hard indeed and very foolish, to remain cross when someone else is perfectly good natured.

Suddenly the Merry Little Breeze danced up to Jimmy Skunk and whispered in his right ear. Then he danced around and whispered in his left ear. Jimmy Skunk's eyes snapped and his mouth began to water.

"Where, Little Breeze, where?" he begged.

"Follow me," cried the Merry Little Breeze, racing off up the Crooked Little Path so fast that Jimmy Skunk lost his breath trying to keep up, for you know Jimmy Skunk seldom hurries.

When they came to the big flat stone Jimmy Skunk grasped it with both hands and pulled and pulled. Up came the stone so suddenly that Jimmy Skunk fell over flat on his back. When he had scrambled to his feet there were beetles and beetles, running in every direction to find a place to hide.

"Thank you, thank you, Little Breeze," shouted Jimmy Skunk as he started to catch beetles for his breakfast.

And the Little Breeze laughed happily as he danced away to join the other Merry Little Breezes on the Green Meadows. There he found them very,

very busy, very busy indeed, so busy that they could hardly find time to nod to him. What do you think they were doing? They were toting *gold!* Yes, Sir, toting gold! And this is how it happened:

While the first Little Breeze was showing Peter Rabbit the field of tender young carrots, and while the second Little Breeze was leading Jimmy Skunk to the flat stone and the beetles, the other Merry Little Breezes had found Bumble the Bee. Now Bumble the Bee is a lazy fellow, though he pretends to be the busiest fellow in the world, and they found him grumbling as he buzzed with a great deal of fuss from one flower to another.

"What's the matter, Bumble?" cried the Merry Little Breezes.

"Matter enough," grumbled Bumble the Bee. "I've got to make a sack of honey, and as if that isn't enough, old

Mother Nature has ordered me to carry a sack of gold from each flower I visit to the next flower I visit. If I don't I can get no honey. Buzz-buzz-buzz," grumbled Bumble the Bee.

The Merry Little Breezes looked at the million little flowers on the Green Meadows, each waiting a sack of gold to give and a sack of gold to receive. Then they looked at each other and shouted happily, for they too would now be able to cry " busy, busy, busy."

From flower to flower they hurried, each with a bag of gold over his shoulder. Wherever they left a bag they took a bag, and all the little flowers nodded happily to see the Merry Little Breezes at work.

Jolly, round, red Mr. Sun climbed higher and higher and higher in the blue sky, where he can look down and see all things, great and small. His smile was broader than ever as he watched the

hurrying, scurrying Little Breezes working instead of playing. Yet after all it was a kind of play, for they danced from flower to flower and ran races across bare places where no flowers grew.

By and by the Merry Little Breezes met Peter Rabbit. Now Peter Rabbit had made a good breakfast of tender young carrots, so he felt very good, very good indeed.

"Hi!" shouted Peter Rabbit, "come play with me."

"Can't," cried the Merry Little Breezes all together, "we have work to do!"

Off they hurried, while Peter Rabbit stretched himself out full length in a sunny spot, for Peter Rabbit also is a lazy fellow.

Down the Crooked Little Path onto the Green Meadows came Jimmy Skunk.

"Ho!" shouted Jimmy Skunk as soon as he saw the Little Breezes, "come play with me."

"Can't," cried the Little Breezes, "for we are busy, busy, busy," and they laughed happily.

When they reached the Laughing Brook they found Billy Mink curled up in a round ball, fast asleep. It isn't often that Billy Mink is caught napping, but he had had a good breakfast of trout, he had found no one to play with and, as he never works and the day was so bright and warm, he had first looked for a place where he thought no one would find him and had then curled himself up to sleep.

One of the Little Breezes laid down the bag of gold he was carrying and creeping ever so softly over to Billy Mink began to tickle one of Billy's ears with a straw.

At first Billy Mink didn't open his

eyes, but rubbed his ear with a little black hand. Finally he jumped to his feet wide awake and ready to fight whoever was bothering him. But all he saw was a laughing Little Breeze running away with a bag of gold on his back.

So all day long, till Old Mother West Wind came with her big bag to carry them to their home behind the Purple Hills, the Merry Little Breezes hurried this way and that way over the Green Meadows. No wee flower was too tiny to give and receive its share of gold, and not one was overlooked by the Merry Little Breezes.

Old Mother Nature, who knows everything, heard of the busy day of the Merry Little Breezes. Nobody knows how she heard of it. Perhaps jolly, round, red Mr. Sun told her. Perhaps — but never mind. You can't fool old

Mother Nature anyway and it's of no use to try.

So old Mother Nature visited the Green Meadows to see for herself, and when she found how the Merry Little Breezes had distributed the gold she was so pleased that straightway she announced to all the world that thenceforth and for all time the Merry Little Breezes of Old Mother West Wind should have charge of the distribution of the gold of the flowers on the Green Meadows, which they have to this day.

And since that day the Merry Little Breezes have been merrier than ever, for they have found that it is not nearly so much fun to play all the time, but that to work for some good in the world is the greatest fun of all.

So every year when the gold of the flowers, which some people do not know is gold at all but call pollen, is ready you

will find the Merry Little Breezes of Old Mother West Wind very, very busy among the flowers on the Green Meadows. And this is the happiest time of all.

XIV

WHY HOOTY THE OWL DOES NOT PLAY ON THE GREEN MEADOWS

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THE Merry Little Breezes of Old Mother West Wind were having a good-night game of tag down on the Green Meadows. They were having *such* a jolly time while they waited for Old Mother West Wind and her big bag to take them to their home behind the Purple Hills. Jolly, round, red Mr. Sun had already put his night-cap on. Black shadows crept softly out from the Purple Hills onto the Green Meadows. The Merry Little Breezes grew sleepy, almost too sleepy to play, for Old Mother West Wind was very, very late.

Farther and farther and farther out onto the Green Meadows crept the black shadows. Suddenly one seemed to separate from the others. Softly, oh so softly, yet swiftly, it floated over towards the Merry Little Breezes. One of them happened to look up and saw it coming. It was the same Little Breeze who one time stayed out all night. When he looked up and saw this seeming shadow moving so swiftly he knew that it was no shadow at all.

"Here comes Hooty the Owl," cried the Little Breeze.

Then all the Merry Little Breezes stopped their game of tag to look at Hooty the Owl. It is seldom they have a chance to see him, for usually Hooty the Owl does not come out on the Green Meadows until after the Merry Little Breezes are snugly tucked in bed behind the Purple Hills

"Perhaps Hooty the Owl will tell us why it is that he never comes out to play with us," said one of the Little Breezes.

But just as Hooty the Owl floated over to them up came Old Mother West Wind, and she was in a great hurry, for she was late, and she was tired. She had had a busy day, a very busy day indeed, hunting for a rain cloud which had gone astray. So now she just opened her big bag and tumbled all the Merry Little Breezes into it as fast as she could without giving them so much as a chance to say "Good evening" to Hooty the Owl. Then she took them off home behind the Purple Hills.

Of course the Merry Little Breezes were disappointed, very much disappointed. But they were also very sleepy, for they had played hard all day.

"Never mind," said one of them, drowsily, "to-morrow we'll ask Great-

Grandfather Frog why it is that Hooty the Owl never comes out to play with us on the Green Meadows. He'll know."

The next morning Old Mother West Wind was late in coming down from the Purple Hills. When she finally did turn the Merry Little Breezes out of her big bag onto the Green Meadows jolly, round, red Mr. Sun was already quite high in the blue sky. The Merry Little Breezes waited just long enough to say "Good-by" to Old Mother West Wind, and then started a mad race to see who could reach the Smiling Pool first.

There they found Great-Grandfather Frog sitting on his big green lily pad as usual. He was very contented with the world, was Grandfather Frog, for fat green flies had been more foolish than usual that morning and already he had all that he could safely tuck inside his white and yellow waistcoat.

"Good morning, Grandfather Frog," shouted the Merry Little Breezes. "Will you tell us why it is that Hooty the Owl never comes out to play with us on the Green Meadows?"

"Chug-a-rum," said Great-Grandfather Frog, gruffly, "how should I know?"

You see, Grandfather Frog likes to be teased a little.

"Oh, but you do know, for you are so old and so very wise," cried the Merry Little Breezes all together.

Grandfather Frog smiled, for he likes to be thought very wise, and also he was feeling very good, very good indeed that morning.

"Chug-a-rum," said Grandfather Frog. "If you'll sit perfectly still I'll tell you what I know about Hooty the Owl. But remember, you must sit perfectly still, *per-fect-ly* still."

The Merry Little Breezes sighed, for it is the hardest thing in the world for them to keep perfectly still unless they are asleep. But they promised that they would, and when they had settled down, each one in the heart of a great white water lily, Grandfather Frog began:

"Once upon a time, when the world was young, Hooty the Owl's grandfather a thousand times removed used to fly about in daylight with the other birds. He was very big and very strong and very fierce, was Mr. Owl. He had great big claws and a hooked bill, just as Hooty the Owl has now, and he was afraid of nothing and nobody.

"Now when people are very big and very strong and afraid of nothing and nobody they are very apt to care for nothing and nobody but themselves. So it was with Mr. Owl. Whatever he saw that he wanted he took, no matter to

whom it belonged, for there was no one to stop him.

"As I have already told you, Mr. Owl was very big and very strong and very fierce and he was a very great glutton. It took a great many little birds and little animals to satisfy his appetite. But he didn't stop there! No, Sir, he didn't stop there! He used to kill harmless little meadow people just for the fun of killing. and because he could. Every day he grew more savage. Finally no one smaller than himself dared stir on the Green Meadows when he was around. The little birds no longer sang. The Fieldmice children no longer played among the meadow grasses. Those were sad days, very sad days indeed on the Green Meadows," said Grandfather Frog, with a sigh.

"At last old Mother Nature came to visit the Green Meadows and she soon

saw what a terrible state things were in. No one came to meet her, for you see no one dared to show himself for fear of fierce old Mr. Owl.

"Now I have told you that Mr. Owl was afraid of nothing and nobody, but this is not quite true, for he was afraid, very much afraid of old Mother Nature. When he saw her coming he was sitting on top of a tall dead stump and he at once tried to look very meek and very innocent.

"Old Mother Nature wasted no time. 'Where are all my little meadow people and why do they not come to give me greeting?' demanded old Mother Nature of Mr. Owl.

"Mr. Owl bowed very low. 'I'm sure I don't know. I think they must all be taking a nap,' said he.

"Now you can't fool old Mother Nature and it's of no use to try. No, Sir, you can't fool old Mother Nature. She

just looked at Mr. Owl and she looked at the feathers and fur scattered about the foot of the dead stump. Mr. Owl stood first on one foot and then on the other. He tried to look old Mother Nature in the face, but he couldn't. You see, Mr. Owl had a guilty conscience and a guilty conscience never looks anyone straight in the face. He did wish that Mother Nature would say something, did Mr. Owl. But she didn't. She just looked and looked and looked and looked straight at Mr. Owl. The longer she looked the uneasier he got and the faster he shifted from one foot to the other. Finally he shifted so fast that he seemed to be dancing on top of the old stump.

"Gradually, a few at a time, the little meadow people crept out from their hiding places and formed a great circle around the old dead stump. With old Mother Nature there they felt sure that

no harm could come to them. Then they began to laugh at the funny sight of fierce old Mr. Owl hopping from one foot to the other on top of the old dead stump. It was the first laugh on the Green Meadows for a long, long, long time.

"Of course Mr. Owl saw them laughing at him, but he could think of nothing but the sharp eyes of old Mother Nature boring straight through him, and he danced faster than ever. The faster he danced the funnier he looked, and the funnier he looked the harder the little meadow people laughed.

"Finally old Mother Nature slowly raised a hand and pointed a long forefinger at Mr. Owl. All the little meadow people stopped laughing to hear what she would say.

"'Mr. Owl,' she began, 'I know and you know why none of my little meadow people were here to give me greeting.

And this shall be your punishment: From now on your eyes shall become so tender that they cannot stand the light of day, so that hereafter you shall fly about only after round, red Mr. Sun has gone to bed behind the Purple Hills. No more shall my little people who play on the Green Meadows all the day long have cause to fear you, for no more shall you see to do them harm.'

"When she ceased speaking all the little meadow people gave a great shout, for they knew that it would be even as Mother Nature had said. Then began such a frolic as the Green Meadows had not known for many a long day.

"But Mr. Owl flew slowly and with difficulty over to the darkest part of the deep wood, for the light hurt his eyes dreadfully and he could hardly see. And as he flew the little birds flew around him in a great cloud and plucked out his

feathers and tormented him for he could not see to harm them."

Grandfather Frog paused and looked dreamily across the Smiling Pool. Suddenly he opened his big mouth and then closed it with a snap. One more foolish green fly had disappeared inside the white and yellow waistcoat.

"Chug-a-rum," said Grandfather Frog, "those were sad days, sad days indeed for Mr. Owl. He couldn't hunt for his meals by day, for the light blinded him. At night he could see but little in the darkness. So he got little to eat and he grew thinner and thinner and thinner until he was but a shadow of his former self. He was always hungry, was Mr. Owl, always hungry. No one was afraid of him now, for it was the easiest thing in the world to keep out of his way.

"At last old Mother Nature came again to visit the Green Meadows and

the Green Forest. Far, far in the darkest part of the deep wood she found Mr. Owl. When she saw how very thin and how very, very miserable he was her heart was moved to pity, for old Mother Nature loves all her subjects, even the worst of them. All the fierceness was gone from Mr. Owl. He was so weak that he just sat huddled in the thickest part of the great pine. You see he had been able to catch very little to eat.

"'Mr. Owl,' said old Mother Nature gently, 'you now know something of the misery and the suffering which you have caused others, and I think you have been punished enough. No more may you fly abroad over the Green Meadows while the day is bright, for still is the fear of you in the hearts of all my little meadow people, but hereafter you shall not find it so difficult to get enough to eat. Your eyes shall grow big, bigger than the eyes

of any other bird, so that you shall be able to see in the dusk and even in the dark. Your ears shall grow large, larger than the ears of any of the little forest or meadow people, so that you can hear the very least sound. Your feathers shall become as soft as down, so that when you fly none shall hear you.'

"And from that day it was even so. Mr. Owl's eyes grew big and bigger until he could see as well in the dusk as he used to see in the full light of day. His ears grew large and larger until his hearing became so keen that he could hear the least rustle, even at a long distance. And when he flew he made no sound, but floated like a great shadow.

"The little meadow people no longer feared him by day, but when the shadows began to creep out from the Purple Hills each night and they heard his voice 'Whoo-too-whoo-hoo-hoo' they felt all

the old fear of him. If they were wise they did not stir, but if they were foolish and so much as shivered Mr. Owl was sure to hear them and silently pounce upon them.

"So once more Mr. Owl grew strong and fierce. But only at night had anyone cause to fear him, and then only the foolish and timid.

"And now you know," concluded Grandfather Frog, "why it is that Hooty the Owl never comes out to play with you on the Green Meadows, and why his eyes are so big and his ears so large."

"Thank you, thank you, Grandfather Frog!" cried the Merry Little Breezes, springing up from the white water lilies and stretching themselves. "We'll bring you the first foolish green fly we can find."

Then away they rushed to hunt for it.

XV

DANNY MEADOW MOUSE LEARNS TO LAUGH

DANNY MEADOW MOUSE sat on his doorstep and sulked. The Merry Little Breezes of Old Mother West Wind ran past, one after another, and pointing their fingers at him cried:

"Fie, Danny Meadow Mouse!
Better go inside the house!
Babies cry — oh my! oh my!
You're a baby — go and cry!"

Pretty soon along the Lone Little Path came Peter Rabbit. Peter Rabbit looked at Danny Meadow Mouse. Then he pointed a finger at him and said:

"Cry, Danny, cry!
Mammy'll whip you by and by!
Then we'll all come 'round to see
How big a baby you can be.
Cry, Danny, cry!"

Danny Meadow Mouse began to snivel. He cried softly to himself as Peter Rabbit hopped off down the Lone Little Path. Soon along came Reddy Fox. He saw Danny Meadow Mouse sitting on his doorstep crying all by himself. Reddy Fox crept up behind a tall bunch of grass. Then suddenly he jumped out right in front of Danny Meadow Mouse.

"Boo!" cried Reddy Fox.

It frightened Danny Meadow Mouse. He jumped almost out of his skin, and ran into the house crying at the top of his voice.

"Ha, ha, ha," laughed Reddy Fox

"Danny, Danny, crying Dan
Boo-hoo-hooed and off he ran!"

Then Reddy Fox chased his tail all the way down the Lone Little Path onto the Green Meadows.

By and by Danny Meadow Mouse came out again and sat on his doorstep. He had stopped crying, but he looked very unhappy and cross and sulky. Hopping and kipping down the Lone Little Path came Striped Chipmunk.

"Come play with me," called Danny Meadow Mouse.

Striped Chipmunk kept right on hopping and skipping down the Lone Little Path.

"Don't want to," said Striped Chipmunk, sticking his tongue in his cheek.

"Cry-baby Danny
Never'll be a manny!
Run to mamma, Danny, dear,
And she will wipe away your tear!"

Striped Chipmunk hopped and skipped out of sight, and Danny Meadow Mouse

began to cry again because Striped Chipmunk would not play with him.

It was true, dreadfully true! Danny Meadow Mouse *was* a cry-baby and no one wanted to play with him. If he stubbed his toe he cried. If Striped Chipmunk beat him in a race he cried. If the Merry Little Breezes pulled his whiskers just in fun he cried. It had come to such a pass that all the little meadow people delighted to tease him just to make him cry. Nowhere on all the Green Meadows was there such a cry-baby as Danny Meadow Mouse.

So Danny sat on his doorstep and cried because no one would play with him and he was lonely. The more he thought how lonely he was, the more he cried.

Presently along came old Mr. Toad. Now Mr. Toad looks very grumpy and out of sorts, but that is because you do not know old Mr. Toad. When he

reached the house of Danny Meadow Mouse he stopped right in front of Danny. He put his right hand behind his right ear and listened. Then he put his left hand behind his left ear and listened some more. Finally he put both hands on his hips and began to laugh.

Now Mr. Toad's mouth is very big indeed, and when he opens it to laugh he opens it very wide indeed.

"Ha, ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Mr. Toad.

Danny Meadow Mouse cried harder than ever, and the harder he cried the harder old Mr. Toad laughed. By and by Danny Meadow Mouse stopped crying long enough to say to Mr. Toad:

"What are you laughing for, Mr. Toad?"

Mr. Toad stopped laughing long enough to reply:

"I'm laughing, Danny Meadow

Mouse, because you are crying at me. What are you crying for? "

"I'm crying," said Danny Meadow Mouse, "because you are laughing at me." Then Danny began to cry again, and Mr. Toad began to laugh again.

"What's all this about?" demanded some one right behind them.

It was Jimmy Skunk.

"It's a new kind of game," said old Mr. Toad. "Danny Meadow Mouse is trying to see if he can cry longer than I can laugh."

Then old Mr. Toad once more opened his big mouth and began to laugh harder than ever. Jimmy Skunk looked at him for just a minute and he looked so funny that Jimmy Skunk began to laugh too.

Now a good honest laugh is like whooping cough — it is catching. The first thing Danny Meadow Mouse knew his tears would not come. It's a fact, Danny

Meadow Mouse had run short of tears. The next thing he knew he wasn't crying at all — he was laughing. Yes, Sir, he actually was laughing. He tried to cry, but it was of no use at all; he just *had* to laugh.

The more he laughed the harder old Mr. Toad laughed. And the harder Mr. Toad laughed the funnier he looked. Pretty soon all three of them, Danny Meadow Mouse, old Mr. Toad and Jimmy Skunk, were holding their sides and rolling over and over in the grass, they were laughing so hard.

By and by Mr. Toad stopped laughing.

"Dear me, dear me, this will never do!" said Mr. Toad. "I must get busy in my garden.

"The little slugs, they creep and crawl
And eat and eat from spring to fall
They never stop to laugh nor cry,
And really couldn't if they'd try.

So if you'll excuse me I'll hurry along to get them out of my garden."

Mr. Toad started down the Lone Little Path. After a few hops he paused and turned around.

"Danny Meadow Mouse," said old Mr. Toad, "an honest laugh is like sunshine; it brightens the whole world. Don't forget it."

Jimmy Skunk remembered that he had started out to find some beetles, so still chuckling he started for the Crooked Little Path up the hill. Danny Meadow Mouse, once more alone, sat down on his doorstep. His sides were sore, he had laughed so hard, and somehow the whole world had changed. The grass seemed greener than he had ever seen it before. The sunshine was brighter and the songs of the birds were sweeter. Altogether it was a very nice world, a very nice world indeed to live in. Somehow

he felt as if he never wanted to cry again.

Pretty soon along came the Merry Little Breezes again, chasing butterflies. When they saw Danny Meadow Mouse sitting on his doorstep they pointed their fingers at him, just as before, and shouted:

"Fie, Danny Meadow Mouse!
Better go inside the house!
Babies cry — oh my! oh my!
You're a baby — go and cry!"

For just a little minute Danny Meadow Mouse wanted to cry. Then he remembered old Mr. Toad and instead began to laugh.

The Merry Little Breezes didn't know just what to make of it. They stopped chasing butterflies and crowded around Danny Meadow Mouse. They began to tease him. They pulled his whiskers and

rumpled his hair. The more they teased the more Danny Meadow Mouse laughed.

When they found that Danny Meadow Mouse really wasn't going to cry, they stopped teasing and invited him to come play with them in the long meadow grass. Such a good frolic as they did have! When it was over Danny Meadow Mouse once more sat down on his doorstep to rest.

Hopping and skipping back up the Lone Little Path came Striped Chipmunk. When he saw Danny Meadow Mouse he stuck his tongue in his cheek and cried:

"Cry-baby Danny
Never'll be a manny!
Run to mamma, Danny dear,
And she will wipe away your tear!"

Instead of crying Danny Meadow Mouse began to laugh. Striped Chipmunk stopped and took his tongue out of

his cheek. Then he began to laugh too.

"Do you want me to play with you?" asked Striped Chipmunk, suddenly.

Of course Danny did, and soon they were having the merriest kind of a game of hide and seek. Right in the midst of it Danny Meadow Mouse caught his left foot in a root and twisted his ankle. My, how it did hurt! In spite of himself tears did come into his eyes. But he winked them back and bravely began to laugh.

Striped Chipmunk helped him back to his doorstep and cut funny capers while Mother Meadow Mouse bound up the hurt foot, and all the time Danny Meadow Mouse laughed until pretty soon he forgot that his foot ached at all.

When Peter Rabbit came jumping along up the Lone Little Path he began

to shout as soon as he saw Danny Meadow Mouse:

"Cry, Danny, cry!
Mammy'll whip you by and by!
Then we'll all come 'round to see
How big a baby you can be.
Cry, Danny, cry!"

But Danny didn't cry. My, no! He laughed instead. Peter Rabbit was so surprised that he stopped to see what had come over Danny Meadow Mouse. When he saw the bandaged foot and heard how Danny had twisted his ankle Peter Rabbit sat right down on the doorstep beside Danny Meadow Mouse and told him how sorry he was, for happy-go-lucky Peter Rabbit is very tender-hearted. Then he told Danny all about the wonderful things he had seen in his travels, and of all the scrapes he had gotten into.

When Peter Rabbit finally started off

home Danny Meadow Mouse still sat on his doorstep. But no longer was he lonely. He watched Old Mother West Wind trying to gather her Merry Little Breezes into her big bag to take to their home behind the Purple Hills, and he laughed right out when he saw her catch the last mischievous Little Breeze and tumble him, heels over head, in with the others.

" Old Mr. Toad was right, just exactly right," thought Danny Meadow Mouse, as he rocked to and fro on his doorstep. " It *is* much better, oh very much better, to laugh than to cry."

And since that day when Danny Meadow Mouse learned to laugh, no one has had a chance to point a finger at him and call him a cry-baby. Instead every one has learned to love merry little Danny Meadow Mouse, and now they call him " Laughing Dan."

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